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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEARNING STYLES AND STRATEGIES: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

TESIS DOCTORAL

CANDIDATO

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DIRECTORA

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INFORMA:

Que la Tesis Doctoral realizada por D. NICOLA SPAGNA, titulada "The Relationship Between Learning Styles and Strategies: An Empirical Study" y dirigida por La Dra. Dª Mercedes Díez Prados, reúne los requisitos metodológicos y el rigor científico que deben exigirse a un trabajo de investigación de estas características y que, por tanto, puede ser presentada y defendida públicamente.

Para que así conste a los efectos oportunos firmo el presente informe en Alcalá de Henares, a 12 de enero de 2012.

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INFORMA:

Que la tesis reúne los requisitos metodológicos y el rigor científico que deben exigirse a un trabajo de investigación de estas características: está bien estructurada, los objetivos quedan claramente definidos: se especifica la base teórica que sustenta el trabajo; el desarrollo de la investigación responde a los objetivos propuestos; el análisis es exhaustivo, profundo y riguroso; las conclusiones están debidamente justificadas y apoyadas a lo largo del trabajo; y la bibliografía utilizada es la adecuada. Considero, por lo tanto, que es apta para ser presentada y defendida públicamente ante el tribunal que ha de juzgarla.

Alcalá de Henares, a 12 de enero de 2012.

UNIVERSIDAD DE ALCALÁ - Departamento de Filología Moderna

Fdo. Mercedes Díez Prados

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Nobody can teach anything to anybody;

You can only help someone find the answer inside

himself.

Galileo Galilei

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PART 1: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

Theoretical background

1. Introduction

It would not have been possible to conceive a research work such as this one thirty-five years ago. Back in those days what was considered important for teachers was to have their instructional act together. The teaching of foreign/second languages was moving on a one way street. It was unthinkable for those people engaged in the field of education to focus on what was going on in the learners' minds as the emphasis was placed exclusively on what the teacher was doing. It was believed that if a teacher did a good job teaching, learning would automatically ensue. In other words, it was presumed that good teaching generated good learning automatically (Cohen in Griffith, 2008: 8).

A new approach to teaching second/foreign languages began to shape up as a consequence of the publication of "What the Good Language Learner Can Teach us" by Joan Rubin in 1975. In her seminal article Rubin suggested that "…if we knew more about what the 'successful learner' did, we might be able to teach these strategies to poorer learners to enhance their success records." (Rubin, 1975: 41 in Griffiths, 2008). Thanks to this article the teaching field has increasingly been giving attention to the role of learners in the teaching process. The field has recognized that learning is a critical component and that the two aspects are inseparable from one another. This recognition has meant a radical change in the research field as well, causing that a lot of energy, time and effort be dedicated to investigate how learners take in the new information.

Traditionally, second/foreign language classroom activities relied heavily on teaching methods and ways, whereas little attention was paid to how learners acquired and processed the information. For many years, teaching methodologies and approaches

represented the bulk of the investigation in the field of language teaching. At last, in the last three decades, considerable amount of research has been devoted to exploring the workings of the mechanisms of learning. The purpose of this work is to stress the necessity of focussing on the learning process as one side of the dichotomy teaching vs learning. Furthermore, the present dissertation tries to highlight the advantages of an in-depth exploration of the learning process and to provide evidence of the benefits that can be derived from greater knowledge about the learning process, for the ever increasing number of second/foreign language learners and for the teaching profession. Despite the fact that for many years the focus of attention was totally clustered around the teaching methodology, as has been just outlined, in the last three decades or so, teachers, educational administrators and researchers alike have started paying attention to what happens at the other end of the teaching process. This shift of focus has yielded better results for learners. Encouraged by such positive outcomes, research in the field of learning has advanced considerably, especially in the areas of learning styles and strategies. Currently, research is showing that greater knowledge of the learning process and deeper understanding of how learners approach, process and retain new information can improve to a large extent the relationship between teaching and learning, with consequently improved educational outcomes.

Among the factors identified as having great importance for the learning process are learning styles and strategies. Since these are the main topics of this dissertation, it is worthwhile advancing a general definition: Learning styles are the broad approaches to learning a new subject or solving a problem, whereas leaning strategies are specific behaviours that learners use to improve their own learning (Oxford & Green, 1996: 20). Researchers have invested a great deal of resources in exploring these two fields. As a consequence, a vast amount of data about these two subjects is available in the literature, yet, in general, little information can be found about possible links and relationships between learning styles and learning strategies. In particular, very few studies have explored the effect that a direct instruction can have on second language performance,

when suitable learning strategies are matched to a certain learning style. This aspect of language learning is precisely the issue that the present work intends to address.

To narrow down the research target, it is worth saying that this study sets out to analyse whether the deployment of learning strategies, that are compatible with a certain learning style, can enhance second language performance. Some studies (Schroeder, 1993; Zhenhui, 2001) show that when the compatibility condition is not present, the desired results do not appear. In other words, when a serious mismatch exists between the students' learning style and the teaching approach, not only poor results, but also negative learning experiences on the part of the learner are expected to ensue. This dissertation, on the other hand, is grounded on the assumption that an appropriate selection of learning strategies, adopted in accordance with the students' learning style, can produce significantly better results. Based on this assumption, the hypothesis of this study can be formulated as follows: When a learner chooses learning strategies that are compatible with her[1] learning style, then her performance in the second/foreign[2] language is expected to be higher compared to other cases where the matching does not occur.

This issue, as described above, will be approached, firstly, by redefining the learner's and the teacher's roles in the current state of affairs of foreign language teaching (next section). Secondly, the learning strategies will be framed within a wider range of skills which is the attainment of *learner autonomy* (Chapter I). Then, basic concepts, such as learning styles and strategies, and their implications in the second language learning process, will be addressed. In this context, an attempt will be made to clarify key points concerning the terminology and definitions employed in the field of learning styles and strategies. An overview about the taxonomies of learning styles and strategies will be outlined. Additionally, the characteristics of the strategies will be explored, and arguments in favour of using learning strategies will be put forward (Chapters II and III). The theoretical background will continue with an exploration of the foreign language teaching methodology (Chapter IV). This chapter is meant to give an overview of the most widely

[1] The female gender will be used in this work to refer to learner, teacher or instructor unless the subject is clearly male.
[2] Since the investigation conducted for the thesis was carried out in a foreign language setting (in reference to the English language), from now on we will refer to foreign language learning (FLL).

used approaches to foreign language teaching, while at the same time searching for those theoretical learning principles that underpin those teaching methods. In this undertaking, a constant reference to the numerous learning theories of the last century was made. Chapter IV wants also to bring out that a great deal of learning strategies as described in Chapter III are already embedded in the procedures, activities and the principles supporting the methods as presented by their authors. Finally, the last chapter (Chapter V) of the theoretical background deals with the most celebrated learning theories and their authors from the second half of the last century up to our days.

The second part of this dissertation consists of empirical work. Two studies will be presented. The first one addresses a small-scale investigation. In this research two groups, totalling around twenty participants, were observed. These were ESO[3] students attending two private schools in Madrid, and preparing to sit the First Certificate Examination. All the participants replied to a learning style questionnaire, and a learning style for each student was worked out. After that, a list of suggested learning strategies, appropriately chosen to suit each learning style, was handed out to every student. Then, as students completed those tests that make up the five papers of the FCE, their scores were recorded, compared and analysed. Finally, in the last part results are discussed, and a conclusion is reached. The second study addresses two groups of students as well totalling twenty-four students of the same age range like in the first study. This study is more complete in the sense that more variables have been controlled and it adopts a more systematic approach. The two studies can be considered longitudinal in the sense that they observe the same variables and the same subjects over a certain period of time, and also because they aim at finding a correlation between two or more factors. The dissertation ends with a report and a discussion about the findings.

1. The teacher and learner's roles revised

During the last two or three decades there has been a slow but constant shift of focus in the teaching of foreign languages. Up to the nineteen-sixties, teaching had been regarded as the sole variable responsible for producing results in a foreign language classroom, whereas learning was seen as a natural, spontaneous process. However, as research explored in

[3] ESO stands for 'Escuela Secundaria Obligatoria' in the Spanish educational system.

depth the nature of learning, it was becoming clearer that the process of learning could not be taken for granted. More insights about this phenomenon needed to be gained.

Nowadays, considerable research is being conducted in the field of learning, as was pointed out in the introduction, in the hope of coming up with models that can be employed universally in different and varied learning situations with the purpose of facilitating the learning process. The conviction that the strategic control of the learning process on the part of the learners leads to higher capacities, namely the achievement of *learner autonomy*[4], stimulated individuals to concentrate even more on the mechanisms of learning. Only recently, this concern stopped being the exclusive territory of teachers and faculty in general, and reached the higher spheres of education. Presently, the achievement of learner autonomy is found among the several educational goals that a great number of educational institutions intend to pursue (see Torre Diaz, 1998[5]; Seeman & Tavares, 1998[6]; Education Committee of Europe, 1996[7]). Such a goal is even more desirable to the individual learner, since on its achievement may depend her success not only as a member of the school community as a student, but as a practitioner in her professional career in the future. While learner autonomy is desirable in all areas of knowledge, it becomes, for circumstantial reasons (the construction of a European state), almost peremptory in the case of foreign language learning.

One of the main problems learners face when learning a foreign language in a formal context which happens to be distant from the target language community, is the gap that results from language learning and communicative language use. In other words, as foreign

[4] Learner autonomy, as defined by Little (1999: 4), is essentially a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision making and independent action.

[5] A workshop to develop learner autonomy (Taller de fomento de la autonomía de aprendizaje) was established in Spanish public schools, specifically in the Canary Islands region, as a pilot project in 1988. Although the Education Law (L.O.G.S.E.) is overseen by the State and is compulsory in all the Autonomous Regions of Spain, the Ministry of Education determines only some 50% of its structure. The Education Authority of each region is free to determine another 45%, and the remainder is left up to the schools themselves. The workshop scheme was devised as part of this 45% and offered to schools in the Canary Islands as an official part of the curriculum. It is therefore put into practice exclusively in this region and not in the rest of Spain (Canary Islands, Spain, 1998).

[6] In 1993, a new educational law was passed in Denmark, which emphasised the pupils' role in taking responsibility for their own learning.

[7] The Committee of Education of Europe decided on the establishment of a working party to supervise the development of studies that deal with the competences required by language learners and users in communication and learning contexts. In particular, these studies deal with the strategic components of language learning and use.

language learners, people are confronted with a context that differs substantially from the context where the target language is used naturally. Languages are learned as a result of social interaction (Little, 1999a). "Naturalistic" learning, whether of first or subsequent languages, is largely a product of language use, of repeated and sustained efforts to communicate with others. In formal instruction, however, foreign language learning is often undertaken with uncertain hopes that the language may be used some day in the future.
The point I want to make is that to the extent to which languages are taught for the purpose of "learning" and not for the purpose of "using it", there will exist barriers between learning and living (see Little, 1991: 8). Learner autonomy, as is viewed by its supporters, contemplates, among its many aims, one that attempts to remove those barriers that inevitably arise within a teacher-led context (Little, ibid.).

Along with this reflection, one may argue that the way traditional education is conceived seems to propitiate the erection of barriers not only between learning and living, but between learning and teaching as well. Ivan Illich, in his book *Deschooling Society* (1979) writes: "The pupil [...] is 'schooled' to confuse teaching with learning, grade advancement with education, a diploma with competence, and fluency with the ability to say something new" (1979: 9). For Illich schooling pretends to transmit the impression that most learning is the result of teaching, but he points out that it is just the contrary:

> Most learning happens casually, and even most intentional learning is not the result of programmed instruction. Normal children learn their first language casually, although faster if their parents pay attention to them. Most people, who learn a second language well, do so as a result of odd circumstances and not of sequential teaching. They go to live with their grandparents, they travel, or they fall in love with a foreigner. Fluency in reading is also more often than not a result of such extra-curricular activities. Most people, who read widely, and with pleasure, merely believe that they learned to do so in school; when challenged, they easily discard this illusion (1979: 20).

One may or may not share Illich's view about education, but his case should make us reflect about how much subjects like geography, history, chemistry or physics and even literature impinge upon the lives that students lead outside school; or how knowledge flowing from these areas enhances pupils' survival when in contact with real life, or even still how the information contained in these subjects improves pupils' interaction with their surroundings.

Moreover, the gap between learning and living, and teaching and learning may be only the surface of a deep-rooted phenomenon that takes place inside the learner's mind. Apparently, in an other- (teacher) directed learning setting, learners are left little space for decision making. As a matter of fact, in many instances in formal education, the content of learning is being pushed on the learner. This not only does not help to build responsibility on the part of the learner, it also generates a situation of alienation which, in turn, installs a mechanism of distance between the learner and the content being learned. It is as if this content was not part of her immediate universe. Barnes, who distinguishes between what he calls "school knowledge" and "action knowledge", shares this view:

> School knowledge is the knowledge that someone else presents to us. We partly grasp it, enough to answer the teacher's questions, to do exercises, and to answer examination questions, but it remains someone else's knowledge, not ours (1976: 81).

Psychologically, this results in the learner not wanting this content to be part of her knowledge. It may well happen that the content being processed this way, gets packed in a separate compartment with the risk that it will not be retrieved again. Barnes writes:

> If we never use this knowledge we probably forget it. In so far as we use knowledge for our own purposes, however we begin to incorporate it into our view of the world, and to use parts of it to cope with the exigencies of living [...]. Once the knowledge becomes incorporated into that view of the world on which our actions are based I would say that it has become *action knowledge* (ibid.).

One might reckon that the mental tension just described may well be the norm among learners who make up the formal educational system, in which case we have to face the fact that there is still little known about the learning process. But no matter how extended this phenomenon might be, the way formal schooling is set up seems to suggest that there is a gap between teaching and learning. It appears to be clear that the two processes are quite distinct. Teaching, as it is conceived, is a teacher-oriented activity which maintains as its main tenet the transmission of a specific or general content to a group of pupils who may not have chosen or may not be ready to receive that information. Learning, on the other hand, is a student-oriented process with its own rules. It is an undertaking that proceeds at its own rhythm and reaches its own end results (Bruner, 1966).

Ideally, we should be able to create a context where the learner is the central figure and where everything is arranged around her. Teachers of foreign languages, to be most effective, must understand who their learners really are. This means teachers must comprehend differences among their students in many individual characteristics, such as age, sex, motivation, anxiety, self-esteem, tolerance of ambiguity, risk-taking, co-operation, competition and language learning styles and strategies among others. We need to have keys for knowing our students better (Oxford, 1992).

About students' teacher-dependence Nunan writes:

> They expect the teacher to structure the learning situation for them, telling them what to learn and how to learn, as their high school teachers have done. [...] I decided, therefore, to see whether incorporating a learning strategy and self-monitoring dimension into the classroom would help my students develop the self-reflective orientation they would need to realise their potential as university students (1996: 35).

In an attempt to shed some light on who holds responsibility in the teaching-learning process, Holec (1996), in his proposal of 'self-directed learning', points to the importance of sharing educational decisions with students. He argues that if it is desirable that learners take responsibility for their own learning, then they should be allowed to participate in the decision making process. Even if much of the knowledge handled in schools only obeys the law established by the grading system, learners' participation in the decision making process may help turn school knowledge into action knowledge. Knowledge becomes meaningful and is desired when there is a need to satisfy a necessity, to fulfil a purpose, or to solve a problem (Holec, 1981).

Richterich argues, in her description of the components of strategies, that:

> The visible component of the strategy for the learner consists in COMBINING his actions and resources in order to complete the learning process and, for the teacher, in COMBINING his actions and resources in order to COMPLETE the teaching process while accepting the *LOSS of his knowledge and authority* (italics in original) (1996: 52).

Whitehead offers a similar and novel view about the teachers' role when he writes:

> A good teacher approaches her job with an open mind, not to 'fix' but to work in partnership and build strategies for improvement. What needs to be done is what good teachers, good doctors, good consultants have always done: to make themselves redundant (because they have achieved the help that was needed from them) as quickly and enjoyable as possible (1998: 92).

From the above illustration, there seems to be a concern among some educational theorists, as well as pragmatic representatives of the educational field, about the roles of teachers and learners. Such concern appears to be a call for teachers to abandon their traditional function as transmitters of knowledge and assume the role of facilitators of knowledge. From this perspective, instructors would be seen as the providers of those means, material, methodological or other that facilitate leaning. Accordingly, this change would imply a new role for learners as well. These would take on a more central figure within the teaching-learning domain, together with a new responsibility (Little, 1996a). In conclusion, in order to implement the kind of teaching that aims at developing students' autonomy, teachers would need to know about their students' personal characteristics, their learning styles, beliefs and motivations. Furthermore, learners would need help to become more aware of what they carry within themselves (motivation, anxiety, self-confidence and other personality factors) when facing a learning situation. Simultaneously, they would need to be coached for acquiring learning abilities (learning strategies), and for the specific steps they take to achieve skills in the learning and use of a second language (learner strategies). It can be expected, then, that as learners become more competent with regard to the strategic control of the language learning process (Little, 1996b), instructors can shift part of the responsibility of the educational burden, so many times held mainly by the teacher alone, to the learners. This shift of responsibility, however, should be gradual and should reach the point where learners can function as co-teachers and "learners".

CHAPTER I: LEARNER AUTONOMY

CHAPTER I: Learner autonomy

1. Introduction

Still maintaining that the purpose of this research is to demonstrate that most efficient language learning depends to a great extent on the learner ability to select and use appropriate learning strategies, this focus on learning can actually be framed within a wider scope on the part of the learner which is the attainment of *learner autonomy.*

Even though the concept of learner autonomy lay latent in the back of a great number of linguists' and professionals minds, it was actually never clearly spelled out. The document that triggered this renewed interest in learner autonomy came from the hand of Henry Holec (1981). In 1979, Holec issued a publication in the form of a report, which was two years later published as a book, titled *Autonomy in Foreign Language Learning.* This work was commissioned by the Council of Europe which was concerned with the problem of a permanent adult education. Here, Holec proposes innovatory solutions of many kinds that capture the essence of the general movement in adult education in those days. These proposals are still very current in our days, as can be seen in the following quotation:

> The need to develop the individual's freedom by developing those abilities which will enable him to act more responsibly in running the affairs of the society in which we live (Holec 1981:1).

Holec borrowed this view from another report written by Janne (1977) and commissioned by the Council of Europe too, where it is clearly expressed that adult education:

> …becomes an instrument for arousing an increasing sense of awareness and liberation in man, and, in some cases, an instrument for changing the environment itself. From the idea of man "product of his society" one moves to the idea of man "producer of society" (Holec 1981:1).

As is subtly implied, Holec advocates for a type of learning that transcends the boundaries of a more or less formal educational context and projects the content of learning into every other spheres of life.

But what exactly is learner autonomy? As we have just seen, the term itself first appeared in 1981 with Henri Holec who is considered the "father" of learner autonomy. It is actually a problematic term to define. First, because it is widely confused with self-instruction; then, because it is a slippery concept due to its multiple aspects and nature. The rapidly expanding literature has debated, for example, whether learner autonomy should be thought of as capacity (Little, 1991) or behavior (Dickinson, 1995); whether it is characterized by learners' responsibility (Holec) or learners' control (Richterich, 1996); whether it is a psychological phenomenon (Kelly, 1955; Atkinson, 1993) with political implications or a political right with psychological implications (Collins & Hammond, 1991; Van Lier, 1995); and whether the development of learner autonomy depends on a complementary teacher autonomy (Benson, 2001).

In this respect many definitions have been put forward, depending on the writer, the context and the level of debate educators have come to; it has been considered as a personal human trait, as a political measure or as an educational move. This is due to the fact that autonomy is seen either (or both) as a means or as an end in education.

In general terms, the expression learner autonomy has come to be used in at least five ways with respect to adult education. First, it indicates that situation where learners study entirely on their own. Second, learner autonomy is the set of skills which can be learned and applied in self-directed learning. Sometimes learner autonomy is addressed to as an inborn capacity which becomes suppressed by formal education. Other times it is meant as the exercise of the learner's responsibility for his/her own learning. And finally it is seen as the right of learners to determine the direction of their own learning

(Benson and Voller, 1997).

As we can see learner autonomy is described as skills, a capacity, a right, an obligation or a situation but above all learner autonomy is about *learning to learn*. It involves risk taking by all concerned, insight and a positive attitude. It requires tutors to trust students' abilities and to promote the use of student-directed learning. It encourages students to take responsibility for

their learning and work in partnership with tutors and other students. This means taking on a readiness to be pro-active in self-management and in interaction with others. It also encourages learners to develop assessment for learning. Students reflect on their experiences and are able to create their own meanings and challenge ideas and theories (Little, 1991).

So we can say that the characteristics of an autonomous learner include self-awareness, taking responsibility for one's own learning, critical reflection and thinking and working creatively in complex situations. But if we carry this description of learner autonomy into a strictly basic educational context, there seems to be seven main attributes that characterize autonomous learners as Omaggio puts it (Omaggio, 1978, in Wenden, 1998: 41-42).

1. Autonomous learners have insights into their learning styles and strategies;
2. Take an active approach to the learning task at hand;
3. Are willing to take risks;
4. Are good guessers;
5. Attend to form as well as to content, that is, place importance on accuracy as well as appropriacy;
6. Develop the target language into a separate reference system and are willing to revise and reject hypotheses and rules that do not apply; and
7. Have a tolerant and outgoing approach to the target language.

This practical definition captures the challenge of learner autonomy: a holistic view of the learner that requires us to engage with the cognitive, meta-cognitive, affective and social dimensions of language learning and to worry about how they interact with one another.

2. Learner Autonomy defined by Little

As the word itself implies, being autonomous means doing things by oneself. In order to be autonomous a person must be able to make decisions and execute those decisions. In learning autonomy the learner is required to take full involvement in planning, monitoring, and evaluating his or her learning (Holec 1981, Little 1991, Dam 1995). However, such involvement does not appear overnight but requires the development of specific skills for reflection and analysis. This view implies that learning autonomy is an *intentional* process which the learner embarks upon. Little specifies that learner autonomy is not a method or behaviour and is not even a permanent

happy state attained by some privileged learners; learner autonomy is a capacity: “A capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making and independent action” (1991: 4)

For Holec (1981: 3) learning autonomy is an ability: “the ability to take charge of one’s learning”. This focus might go as far as to mean that the learner has and holds the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of her learning. Expressed in practical terms it implies that the learner determines the objectives, decides on the content and the procedure, selects the methods and techniques to be used, monitors the procedure of acquisition, and evaluates what has been acquired.

Later on, in an extended definition of learner autonomy, Little provides more details that shorten the distance from the focus given by Holec above when he affirms that:

> In formal educational contexts, the basis of learner autonomy is acceptance of responsibility for one’s own learning; the *development* of learner autonomy depends on the exercise of that responsibility in a never-ending effort to understand what one is learning, how one is learning, and with what degree of success; and the *effect* (italics in original) of learner autonomy is to remove those barriers that so easily erect themselves between formal learning and the wider environment in which the learner lives.
>
> In this definition autonomy is a capacity for a certain range of highly explicit (that is, conscious) behaviour that embraces both the process and the content of learning. Essentially, the definition rests on three arguments: (i) learners cannot help but do their own learning; (ii) this being the case, learning will be more efficient when learners are critically aware of goals and methods; and (iii) it is through the development of such critical awareness that learners are empowered to transcend the limitations of their learning environment (1999: 11).

From the definition above we understand that learning autonomy is inborn within the learner, which suggests that it might happen under the conscious level of the learner, but then we read that in order for this capacity to develop we have to be critically aware of it. In the next section we will analyse these two aspects of learner autonomy (below and above the conscious level) when we explore the concept of autonomy as a universal human capacity rather than a product of Western culture.

3. Autonomy: a universal human capacity, not a Western cultural construct.

When we look at a newborn infant and a few years later look at him again, we get surprised at how this baby has grown. In a way, we can say that human beings are self-producing organisms that grow according to the impulses of their genetic program. The geneticist Rose affirms that:

> The central property of all life is the capacity and necessity to build, maintain and preserve itself, a process known as *autopoiesis*. This is why it is in the very nature of life and living processes themselves that we, as living organisms and specifically as humans, are free agents (1997, in Little, 1999a: 79).

As we grow, human nature will determine the attributes typical of our species and other traits deriving from our genetic inheritance, but the "end result" will be also determined, in great measure, by the interchange between ourselves and the environment. All this does not alter the fact that we cannot help but *produce ourselves*, in a way or another, notwithstanding the factors mentioned above. The child's "development is not subject to the control of external forces" (Little, 1991: 20). Because of this, we can say that we all enjoy a certain capacity for *autonomy.* Such "autonomy is for the most part unconscious" (Ibid.). This condition is present in every stage of a life span. Since the infancy, the baby establishes a relationship with the environment, the baby's mother, and is influenced by it. But the baby also influences the environment it lives in, so reciprocity of social interchange is created between the baby and the environment (Little, 1999a: 79). When the language gets introduced in the social interchange thoughts start to emerge (Vygotsky, 1962). The emergence of thoughts is accompanied by an awareness of not only the baby's thoughts but those of others, and this happens between three and four years of age (Bartsch & Wellman, 1995; in Little, 1999a: 79). From this point on thought and language become intertwined and are responsible for the intellectual development of the child (Vygotsky, 1962). The mechanism through which this occurs is social interaction. According to Vygotsky language plays a central role in developmental learning because of the symbolic tool by which children guide the problem solving behaviour. Words become thoughts and are engraved in the children's deep layer of the mind becoming the "inner speech" which become internalised through "social speech". This process is inevitable and even though the external environment, in the form of parents, siblings and in due course the wider social context, triggers the process, the children cannot help but

construct their own learning. In this sense children enjoy a high degree of autonomy. This development responds to the dictate of a personal agenda and cannot be modified by external elements (Little, 1991).

So thanks to language and social interaction children learn to think and to develop beliefs. Thinking and believing at this stage are characteristics of first-order intentional systems (Astington, 1994; in Little, 1999b: 14). However, according to Vygotsky at some point along the developmental learning the capacity to think becomes separated from the language: "a problem must arise that cannot be solved otherwise than through the formation of new concepts" (Vygotsky, 1962: 55). This new stage in the developmental learning allows the children to think about thinking and to develop beliefs about beliefs: thinking about thinking and forming beliefs about beliefs are characteristics of second-order intentional systems (Little, 1999b:14). This is an important characteristic in relation to the concept of learning autonomy. This idea is better expressed by Dworkin:

> Autonomy is conceived of as a second-order capacity of persons to reflect critically upon their first-order preferences, desires, wishes and so forth and the capacity to accept or attempt to change these in light of higher-order preferences and values. By exercising such a capacity, persons define their nature, give meaning and coherence to their lives, and take responsibility for the kind of persons they are (1988; in Little, 1999b: 14).

We can say, therefore, that we are autonomous to the extent that we can exercise the capacity to reflect about our thoughts and to develop beliefs about previous beliefs or to accept or attempt to change values and preferences, in other words our potential for autonomous behaviour derives from the fact that we are first-order and second-order intentional systems. But the characteristic of being first-order and second-order intentional systems is innate in every human being as long as we are exposed to a linguistic system, which plays a vital role as a cognitive tool, and provided that we are surrounded by a social milieu.

As we have seen, at the developmental stage, autonomous learning begins as an implicit phenomenon. It is sufficient to look at children when they start acquiring the first language; whenever learning takes place the knowledge is *in* the mind or implicit knowledge. At a later stage, as the child faces situations that require a solution, the knowledge becomes explicit which means knowledge that becomes available *to* the mind. This new stage was discovered by Vygotsky (1962) when he was experimenting with a group of children between three and eight years of age

employed in a series of tasks at first fairly easy so that everyone could do, but then becoming more and more difficult. The reaction of the children was varied. While the youngest ones asked the adults for help, he observed that among the medium and older children a new element emerged: the exteriorization of language. In other words, these children accompanied the execution of the task with spontaneous verbal instructions. He concluded that those instructions spontaneously generated by the same children actually served as guidelines to their own actions. This indicates that autonomy, and especially autonomy in formal learning, is a highly conscious phenomenon.

To sum up we can say that: (i) learner autonomy is intrinsic in every stage of learning development and "has always existed independently of particular pedagogies" (Little, 1999b: 15); (ii) learner autonomy at the early stages is implicit in the mind and we cannot help but learn in an autonomous manner because we are first-order intentional systems; (iii) at a later stage we become second-order intentional systems and as such we can think about our thoughts, modify or accept our preferences and values. We can do this because knowledge becomes explicit, available to our minds and this is a highly conscious phenomenon; (iv) the degree of explicitness is probably dependent on individual endowment and the cultural influence; and (v) in formal learning contexts, explicit behaviour is fundamental to allow learner autonomy to develop. Explicit behaviour can be intended in terms of organizing, planning, executing, monitoring, and evaluating one's learning. This practice needs to be encouraged and coached as it does not reveal spontaneously even though it is potentially present in every human being.

Referring to learner autonomy, some people might object to considering learner autonomy simply as a universal human capacity. Apparently, this consideration comes about because it can easily be associated with the Western tradition of participatory democracy and the attached ideal of self-reliance. According to Little (1999b: 11) the suggestion might have surged as a consequence of the definition Holec (1981) gave of learner autonomy where the autonomous learner is invited to take active part in the democratic process. But whatever the reasons, this interpretation can carry negative implications in the field of education since if it is associated with the Western ideal it might lead to be considered as a tool for cultural imperialism. Besides, seen this way, learner autonomy would not be appropriated as a pedagogical goal for those societies alienated to Western societies. However, we can respond to this vision by claiming that if we accept the universal nature of learner autonomy, the fact *per se* discards the idea that it can be considered another Western cultural construct. For more arguments I am going to lean on Little (1999b: 12)

who can provide convincing reasons of why learner autonomy is not just another Western cultural construct.

Little argues, in the first place, that even though the expression learner autonomy crops up in many educational contexts and an increasing number of institutions in Europe are showing an interest in it, in practice "learner autonomy remains a minority pursuit" (Ibid.: 12). The second argument advanced by Little is that if we analyse the ideals of self-knowledge, self-reliance and self-determination, they "figure with equal prominence in the Wisdom literature of very different culture and religious traditions". For example, the Christian humanist idea of learners as "individuals with intentions who take responsibility for the effects of their acts" is not exclusive territory of Western civilization, but the same ideals are found in the Eastern civilization as well. Compare this extract from the twelfth century by a scholar of the Sung Dynasty:

> If you are in doubt, think it out by yourself. Do not depend on others for explanations. Suppose there was no one you could ask, should you stop learning? If you could get rid of the habit of being dependent on others, you will make your advancement in your study (Pierson, 1996: 56; in Ibid.: 12).

And the third argument that Little proposes is the concept of the "sense of self." He quotes Strawson (1996a: 21) who claims that the human being in its essence as such meets no barriers whether cultural, sociological or the like: "the sense that people have of themselves as being, a mental presence, a mental someone, a conscious subject that has a certain character or personality, and is distinct from all its particular experiences, thoughts, hopes, wishes, feelings, and so on," is a biologically determined universal in human nature, and that "when it comes to the sense of the self, the difference between those who can't sleep and those who can sleep may be more important than any cultural differences." The arguments advanced above demonstrate that learner autonomy is not restricted by any cultural or social bonds, but is rather a desirable human condition, which should be present in all spheres of life. It develops thanks to the social nature of man and the instrument that characterises mankind which is communication.

4. The dialogic nature of learner autonomy

Generally speaking, when we talk about *learner autonomy* we are saying that the learner accepts the responsibility for his own learning. This responsibility is not a simple decision taken at any one time. On the contrary, it is a gradually developing state of mind that shapes an attitude favourable to the creation of effective learning behaviours backed up by reflection. But there is more to this. Learner autonomy, as developed in a classroom with a teacher and peers, necessarily entails a social-interaction and an individual-cognitive dimension: in order for it to grow, it has to go through a process of co-operation and collaboration. In planning her classroom activities, the teacher must consider this aspect, since she will be successful to the extent that she is able to engage her learners' co-operation. This, in turn, leads to the consideration that learners' co-operation results from communication which in the majority of the cases is a face-to-face interaction. However simplistic this consideration might seem, we may be facing a profound truth about learning in general, and the key that opens the door to effective second language learning in particular.

Little reports (2000a: 48) that when the Western tradition addresses the psychology of learning, it inevitably focuses on internal processes and mechanisms leaving aside the social and environmental elements. One example of this is Piaget's model of cognitive development, which emphasizes the experience the learner has with her environment and the building of mental schemata as a result of that experience. But Piaget's educational psychology does not mention the social experience of the learner. Another dominant tendency in the field of applied linguistics is the concentration on the importance of the 'input' that feeds the cognitive processes leaving aside the social nature of the input. Another example could be the importance given to the instruction, which in many cases is equivalent to teaching mainly grammar, in the second language classroom.

Fortunately, parallel to these approaches, for some time now, there has been a significant growth of interest in the social-interactive dimension of learning and even more so in the learning of a second language. It can be said that one of the most influential theories on child development has been that of Lev Vygotsky (1978). He sustained that high cognitive faculties do not emerge spontaneously, but are the results of social interactions. The internalization of the cognitive processes come about after the experience of social intercourse. As is illustrated in greater details in the chapter on learning theories (chapter V), Vygotsky argues that a child learns best when he is confronted with a task whose level of difficulty is high enough for him to be unable to carry out by himself, but that he is capable of doing with the help of an adult or of a more capable peer. Vygotsky calls the distance between what the child is capable of doing on his own and the next

level of difficulty, where he needs the support of a more skilled person the "zone of proximal development". The vehicle for the transmission of the instructions between the child and the more skilled instructor is naturally *speech*.

Another author who stresses the importance of communication in foreign language learning is Krashen (1983). His theory is based principally on natural communication. He advocates meaningful interaction in the target language in which speakers centre their attention not in the form of their utterances, but in the communicative act itself. Carl Rogers (1969) argues that for genuine learning to occur at least one condition must exist: "...the facilitation of significant learning rests upon certain attitudinal qualities that exist in the personal *relationship* between facilitator and learner." Even Gordon Pask's (1975) Conversation theory bases all learning on what he calls the Teach – Back technique.

These and other authors sustain that language and learning are indivisible with their social component and that the intrinsic nature of language and learning is dialogic. Unfortunately, when we look at the traditional teaching model, the expository mode, we observe that the communication flow is only one way; there is no interchange of ideas, expression of different viewpoints or questions and replies. This state of affairs contravenes the findings and recommendations of all the researchers cited above, pointing to the expository teaching mode as unsuitable. While a classroom setting arranged around those activities that promote dialogues, negotiation of meanings, decision making and shared responsibility between teacher and learners seem to provide a balance necessary for learning to take place.

5. Teachers and learners: change of roles.

As the situation stands today, we have to consider that the school curriculum is conceived and designed by an educational authority or a governmental agency. We also have to consider that this curriculum does not take into account the learner's needs, her past individual experience, interests or expectations. Additionally, we have to remind that such curriculum is imposed on the learner, without giving her any possibility of negotiation. And here comes the teacher who wants to pass the knowledge contained in books over to the learners. She may be in a position to determine her teaching methods and techniques, but she cannot guarantee that the learner will assimilate and make hers the new data. As a matter of fact, in many cases the learning does not

take place, and if it does, it does so only superficially and in a way that the new data does not aid the learner's survival.

So where does the system go wrong? Maybe it will be necessary to re-shuffle the cards and re-orient the focus of the teaching-learning process. It may be possible that a change in the approach of what goes on in the foreign language classroom has to take place. A shift from teacher-centred approach to a learner-centred approach may be necessary. If and when this happens, the role of the teacher and that of the learner will change significantly. A hand-over of power and responsibility from the teacher to the learner has to occur. As Little points out:

> The transfer of responsibility for learning from the teacher to the learner has far reaching implications, not simply for the way in which education is organised but for power relationships that are central to our social structure. For now the learner generates his own purpose for learning; in pursuit of those purposes he determines not only the content of learning but the way in which learning will take place; and he is responsible for deciding how successful learning is, both as process and as goal-attainment. In other words, the curriculum now comes from within the learner as a product of his past experience and present and future needs (1991:7).

This shift of responsibility is peremptory if we want to see the learner personally involved in the learning process. However, this desirable change does not appear to be a task that can be accomplished overnight. It is just the opposite. If we consider the deep-encrusted roles that teachers and learners have enjoyed over the centuries, we can have an idea of how hard it would be, on the one hand, to ask the teachers to delegate part or all of their authority to learners. And on the other hand, how reluctant learners would be to assume new responsibilities in their learning process. Besides, there is no evidence that the capacity for learning autonomy is inborn. On the contrary, it seems quite a difficult ability to achieve that only expertise hands can provide (Holec, 1981). But one thing can be done at the onset which is the re-shaping and re-defining of teachers' and learners' roles.

If the learner generates his own purpose for learning, if he determines the contents and the way or ways to learn those contents, and he is responsible for deciding how successful his learning is, then we are in the presence of a self-made programme that takes into account the learner's past

experience and present and future needs. Now the learner is ready to assume responsibility for his learning.

6. A shift of focus: from teaching to learning.

The arguments so far in favour of a shift from teaching to learning have addressed mainly the theoretical framework of learner autonomy. But what about the practical aspect? Has anybody ever tried to apply the learner autonomy principles? What are the results like, if any? An answer to these questions comes from Dam (2000: 18), a secondary school teacher in the Danish public school system, who, at one point of her teaching career, questioned the validity of the teacher-centred approach. This meant that she organized her lessons according to her needs or the needs of the course curriculum, decided on the focus which was teacher-oriented, and did not relinquish any decision-making power to learners. So, it happened that she decided to take the plunge and change her teaching ways all the way around. Here is a brief account of her experience.

What moved this teacher to reconsider the organization of her lessons was her conviction that learners do not necessarily learn what we teachers believe to be teaching (Dam, 2000: 18). In this sense she quotes Barnes' book *From Communication to Curriculum*:

> To learn is to develop relationships between what the learner knows already and the new knowledge presented to him, and this can only be done by the learner himself (1976: 83).

Another conviction was the fact that "no school or even university can provide its students with all the knowledge and skills they will need in their adult lives". Instead she believes that what "we can do is give learners an awareness of how they think and how they learn - an awareness which hopefully will help them come to an understanding of themselves and thus increase their self-esteem. This is a prerequisite for enabling them to cope with life and engage in new learning experiences as socially responsible persons" (Dam, 2000: 19). In order to achieve these outcomes the learner has to be placed at the centre of the learning process, and the new knowledge is conditioned to what they already know. To quote Barnes again (Ibid.: 83): "To get the knowledge from out there to in here is for the learner himself to do. The art of teaching is to know how to help the learner in this process."

In the same direction Dam states:

> I define a learning-centred environment as one in which the teacher's knowledge about language learning – what to learn and how to learn – is combined with the learners' knowledge about themselves, their background, their likes and dislikes, their needs, and their preferred learning styles. (...) A learning-centred environment is one in which the learners are: i) given the possibility of being consciously involved in their own learning; ii) and expected to be actively engaged in their own learning and thus made aware of the different elements involved in the learning process – an awareness to be of use in other contexts. (2000: 20)

What follows is a description of the tools she used in her classroom to turn her teaching environment into a learning-centred setting. She focuses on four practical points: a) the organization of the classroom; b) the structure of a lesson; c) the activities taking place; d) and the use of diaries and posters.

a) In this classroom students sit in groups of four, five or six. This setting seems to have a number of advantages. Students face each other and at the same time have the teacher in their visual space. This allows for discussion and peer tutoring. It also invites students to participate and get involved in peer activities. It seems to be less threatening as the student performs in a small group rather than in a larger forum. The focus is not on the teacher any longer but rather on individual students and this facilitates learner-learner interaction.

b) In the structure of a lesson the teacher's responsibilities are clearly stated. The learners' responsibilities are clearly stated, as well as the activities they are expected to undertake. The lesson leaves time for a joint session where learners can share their experiences and the knowledge they have acquired.

c) The activities aim at granting authorship to learners. For example, students sitting in groups are asked to share homework, they carry out a two minute talk, they initiate free-activities in group, pairs or individually, they plan homework for next class, and finally they evaluate, in pairs or individually, the work they carried out.

With this focus learners are constantly asked to consider: Why am I learning English? How do I learn? When and how do I learn best? What do I like? What don't I like? What makes a good teacher? What makes a good learner? It is very possible that this way of carrying out instruction

will satisfy individual student's needs, interests and develop their potential as well as forge character and increase responsibility.

d) In order to avoid chaos in the classroom it is useful to draw out a clearly defined plan of action of what to do at any moment. And this is the purpose of a lesson plan described above, but at the same time this teacher makes use of posters where learners keep track of the ongoing learning process (Ibid.: 30). On the posters learners write what they have learned and how and evaluate their work. This way whatever it is that they have achieved that day is not wiped out at the end of the lesson. This teacher also makes use of diaries which keeps track of the individual learner's work. Learners are coached at the beginning on the format of the diary, how to put the entries, and so on, but once it gets going it becomes an excellent tool for keeping a written record of the learner's progress as well as a tool to make a direct contact between the learner, the teacher and the learner's parents.

According to Dam, the outcome of this experience has been more than positive. Students learned a lot more than just a foreign language. To put it in her own words:

> A learning-centred environment develops in its participants – learners and teachers alike – a self-esteem which supports them not only in their learning but when coping with other exigencies of life (2000: 36).

It needs to be said that this new vision of focussing activities in the foreign language classroom had such a repercussion in the whole country that the Danish Government decided to pass a law "which emphasized the pupil's role in taking responsibility for his or her learning" (Seeman & Tavares, 2000: 61). Many teachers in this country have followed suit on learner autonomy and have written about their experience which resulted in many cases in unexpected success:

> Our job as teachers is to consult the groups about their work, and of course to help in solving any problems that may arise. What continues to astonish us is how little our help is really needed (Ibid.: 64).

A similar experience is under way in the Spanish region of Canary Islands. Faced with the reality that an alarming number of pupils entering secondary education had failed to master the abilities and skills necessary to function in primary school, the education authority of this region has introduced, as part of the official curriculum, an option entitled "Workshop to Develop Learner Autonomy" (Torres Diaz, 2000: 222). Apparently, it was discovered that the low cognition level of the pupils was partly due to the lack of knowledge of learning strategies or to an inability to use them efficiently. It also appeared that the groups entering secondary education were characterised by a wide-ranging diversity and multi-level knowledge and skills. After careful consideration and based on results gathered from the Educational Research and Innovation Department of this Spanish region, Torres Diaz and her team decided to approach the solution to these problems by converting learner autonomy into a subject on the curriculum (Ibid.: 227).

The course was designed establishing the objectives, the content concerning procedures and attitudes, the methodology and the evaluation criteria. Pupils' individual characteristics such as learning styles, attitudes, motivation, interests and their personal and social circumstances were taken into consideration. The aim of the course is "to develop a whole range of ability among pupils so as to make the learning process (...) as productive as possible" (Ibid.: 229). Among the objectives, eight in total, we find in the first place: "To acquire the basic ability to solve problems autonomously, making the pupil responsible for his or her learning process". The second objective aims: "To recognise, analyse and improve the learning strategies required for carrying out a given task after detailed reflection". The other objectives are conceived along similar statements. In the content concerning procedures and attitudes it is interesting to note that in the first three positions we find:

1. Reflection on the processes implicit in learning.
2. Development of strategies that encourage pupils to reflect on the nature of the activities to be developed (objectives, needs, demands, etc.).
3. Development of strategies which are well taught-out and which enable pupils to predict meaning from specific features and use the acquired knowledge in various learning situations. (Ibid.: 230)

The remaining items of the list stress the search and use of strategies that can be applied in multiple learning situations. Even in the methodology formulation everything is geared towards the development of the cognitive, social, affective and compensatory aspects of the learners, placing the stress on the search for and use of appropriate strategies. And finally even in the evaluation criteria, the emphasis is still on learners who have to learn to monitor their progress. I am not in a position to offer any results at this stage as the project is still in course.

Unfortunately not all the efforts to build up a learner autonomy learning context have given the desired results. Nolan (2000: 113) reports on a research project where first-year university students at a College of Education in Czech Republic were the subject of a study in terms of raising the language learning awareness of these future teachers. The project consisted in a course designed: (i) to support students in adapting to a new learning environment (university context) which was more challenging linguistically than their previous school experience, and which required them to learn more independently; and (ii) to guide students toward successful experience of independent self-reflective language learning. Such experience would have influenced their beliefs and practice in their future teaching.

In her report she stresses the difficulties she encountered to get those students to take on a new role and a change of attitude. At the beginning of the course she ran questionnaires to find out about their willingness to take responsibility for their own learning. The questions geared towards beliefs about the nature of English, motivation, beliefs about the nature of language, believes about the role of the teacher, and attitudes to learner autonomy. The results reflected an inclination of the participants to depend on the teacher for almost everything:

> Although confident in their capabilities as language learners, the fairly limited degree of responsibility most of the class were prepared to take on for their own learning was revealing. (...) Nearly half expected to learn in class from the teacher only (...) and to be told what to learn (rejecting the idea that they would like to be able to plan, organize and evaluate their own learning and progress). The vast majority claimed that they wanted the teacher to tell them all their mistakes (Ibid.: 116).

Nolan claims that the above scene changed slightly as the course progressed and reached its end. Although, they still continued to focus on the role of the teacher as the most authoritative, they

were prepared to take some responsibility for their own learning, particularly outside of the classroom. She found that language learning diaries worked as an instrument for self-awareness, self-analysis, and self-evaluation, promoting, thus, more autonomous behaviour, but this option did not seem to be accepted by the less motivated students. She observed that many participants seemed to have changed their students' believes and behaviour as a consequence of the exposure to the language learning process, including strategies combined with group discussion and practical activities followed by reflection (Ibid.: 122). However, the conclusion she drew from her study was that higher education is too late for some students to change their perceptions on learning, and that a good number of students resisted taking increased responsibility for their own learning. She also concluded that many demonstrated a scarce ability to reflect on their own learning.

Another study with comparable characteristics reached similar conclusions. Reinders (2000) conducted a study during a thirteen week English Proficiency Program at Victoria University in Wellington, New Zeeland, for international students most of them from the Far East countries. There were approximately one hundred and fifty learners in the course between men and women. The research took place towards the end of 1999. After the course those students either remained to attend higher education institutions, or went back to their countries to occupy governmental positions. The aims of the course were to improve these learners' performance in: (i) reading and listening to complex information; (ii) taking an active part in discussion; (iii) expressing complex ideas and facts through speech and writing; and (iv) becoming an independent learner of English. Concerning the last aim Reinders counted on the use of the Self-Access Centre (SAC). That was a room where all kinds of material (visual, auditory, tactile, etc.) that had to do with language learning were made available to learners. The course was scheduled to deliver forty hours per week, but part of this time was reserved to self-study precisely in that room. The author of this study spent time in the SAC helping students find references, assisting in the correct use of computer programs, and in general guiding the learners in the promotion of self-study and independent-learning.

The data were collected through direct observation and by means of questionnaires that the learners filled in at the end of the course. The questions asked geared towards the usefulness of the SAC and if they thought that using the SAC they had acquired skills in learning how to learn the target language. The great majority of learners answered positively to all the questions. However,

when the author of the study applied a correlation test between the use of English and proficiency in English; and between proficiency in English and the use of SAC, he found that the correlation values between the use of English and the use of SAC were very low or, what is the same were not representative. Nevertheless, the author continues to report, most learners recognized the importance of acquiring independent learning skills. Some reported feeling more able learners of English, while others could see how to use the skills acquire in the future. Some mentioned the utility of using reading, writing, listening and speaking strategies that they had learned in the SAC. The results, however, have not been conclusive:

> The study clearly indicated that students are very positive about the resources. They are highly appreciated for contributing to learning gains. However, it is unclear if learning gains can be attributed to self-access language learning (SALL). (…) The study also indicated that students were very positive about the resources for the development of their independent learning skills. However, as we have shown, these perceptions were based on a very shallow awareness of what independent learning entails. (…) There is a need for increased awareness among students, both about what independent learning is and about the true potential of the SAC, particularly in forming a bridge to the outside world. More proficient students in particular did not seem to find the resources very helpful.
>
> An important obstacle seems to be the difficulty students have in finding the right resources. This could indicate that the preparation and training of the EPP provided is insufficient. (Reinders, 2000: 92-94).

From the conclusions exposed above we can deduce that the concept of learner autonomy and the means employed to implement the program, namely the self-access center (SAC), maybe even the methodology used are still at a novel phase and need to be refined. Nevertheless, the results obtained in this study may not be the expected ones, but it cannot be denied that the learners completed the course with a positive outlook about the independent learning training received.

I would like to point out that these studies are only some instances of the practical employment of the learner autonomy principles. Other programs of this nature have been run permanently in other parts of the world. In France, for example, we find the CRAPEL (Centre de Recherces et d'Applications Pédagogiques en Langues) at the University of Nancy II which is pioneer in the

research and experimentation of self-directed language learning. Holec (1996: 77) has run this program since the beginning of the 70s. The aim of the centre is to provide those resources, human, material and technological to those learners who feel there is an alternative way of learning besides the traditional teacher-led method. Such learners are pupils and teachers at the same time. The centre provides self-directed learning by training learners in knowledge about the target language, in knowledge about language learning (training in the use of learning strategies), by developing skills such as reading, listening, speaking and writing. Moreover, this training goes beyond the boundaries of acquiring sheer knowledge about the target language or about language learning, but rather concentrates in the *use* of the target language. In practice the programme aims at developing *communicative competence* (emphasis added) where the social and cultural dimensions are well taken into considerations and a strong emphasis is placed in developing those skills that make the learners self-directed (Holec: 1996).

The Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA, USA) was designed by A. Chamot and M. O'Malley. The program aims at boosting not only language learning skills but subject contents, learning facts and concepts in scientific areas. It rests on three components:

1. The *content component* that deals with academic subjects such as mathematics, science, social studies, concepts and skills for science.
2. The *English language development component* aims to teach procedural knowledge that students need to use language as a tool for learning.
3. The *learning strategies instruction component* suggests ways in which teachers can foster autonomy in their students.

Several districts are implementing the CALLA programs in their schools and some books are being designed taking into account the three components described above (Oxford, 1990: 215).

The GRASP (Getting Results and Solving Problems) project in England is another institution where the focus is on training teachers and students alike in the development of those techniques and skills that lead to autonomous learning. The project provides in-service training to teachers, with the objective to encourage active learning, self-direction, and problem solving for both teachers and learners. The creators of the project base the idea on the principle that to encourage active learning in students (learning strategies) teachers need to be trained in teaching strategies. They feel that teacher training must involve active learning and self-responsibility on the part of the teachers themselves first; then, they can go out and train students to become active learners. The

project is co-funded by the Department of Trade and Industry, a private educational trust and other institutions. It involves primary and secondary schools and it is addressed to pupils from eight to fourteen years of age. The teachers move from the "source of all knowledge" role to the "facilitator of learning" function. Part of the responsibility is shifted to the students and there is greater concern for learning strategies.

These are a few examples of institutions, projects, and programs where learner autonomy is being implemented, but there are more instances of this practice in different parts of the world. Learner autonomy is an increasing phenomenon, where more researchers are following up on and becoming involved in it. Here is the testimony of Benson who writes in the author's acknowledgement of his book *Teaching and Researching Autonomy in Language learning* published in 2001:

> This book is the product of a process of autonomous learning that has lasted for twenty years of teaching and research and is not yet complete. It is also the product of numerous learning conversations with other teachers and researchers- a demonstration of the fact that autonomous learners are not isolated learners. Among those whose conversations I have most valued are my colleagues and friends in Hong Kong, especially David Gardner, William Littlewood, Winnie Lor, Elaine Martyn, David Nunan, Richard Pemberton and Peter Voller. (...) (Benson, 2001: xi).

And the quotation follows with more names whose reputation is linked to the learner autonomy field. Benson has not stopped being involved in the field, either as a teacher, as a researcher or a writer as the numerous publications up to this day demonstrate.[8] Nobody, therefore, can deny that the idea of learner autonomy is appealing to the entire community of those involved in the teaching business: teachers, learners, researchers, administrator and institutions alike.

7. Conclusion

[8] Benson's recent publications can be viewed at:

http://www.ied.edu.hk/eng/people/academic/academic_pbenson.htm

I embarked to talk about learner autonomy because the subject matter of this dissertation, learning strategies, is not an objective in itself. Language learning strategies are the means, through which, learners can achieve finer learning skills, higher motivation for learning, a more proper attitude towards learning, in general to become more able and autonomous learners. I wanted to give an overview of this field of knowledge because I believe that the years of training and formation spent in school should be intended to develop learning skills as well as the transmission of knowledge. The time and effort spent in the classrooms should serve to unveil the learner's innermost characteristics as a person and as a learner. She should be able to learn how to learn and develop those necessary learning skills that will help her not only during the school years, to learn about a subject and to pass the required exams, but in the business of living. The training I tried to provide to the candidates in the two studies was geared towards enhancing their reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. I also coached them into making them use their study time and place wisely and with a certain degree of autonomy. When setting deadlines, I negotiated the dates with them. On assigning homework, I allowed them sufficient time so they could think up of a study plan and include the homework I assigned in it. I promoted reading by offering a fairly good selection of titles to choose from. I encouraged them to watch television programs such as TV series, or even the news or the weather forecast, in the target language. Even though the school did not provide a self-study access centre (SAC) as such, I always kept my office (where I keep the didactic resources) door open for them to come and pick the material resources, or maybe ask questions about certain aspects of the language or the language learning process. Consequently, some of the most pro-active learners have made good use of this facility and the results are there to be seen.

The two studies that I conducted are meant to investigate whether the achievement of better language learning results is the consequence of the development of language learning skills through the deployment of language learning strategies. I am not sure whether I was successful in this endeavour. All I can say is that for ten years I have run the Cambridge program in my school as a teacher and as the coordinator. Of all the candidates that registered for the course along these years, very few dropped out. Some candidates had not passed the exam at the first try. They signed up again for the course and tried again. Some candidates tried three times before they passed the exam. One candidate sat the exam for the fourth time before he passed it. The good news about this is that these candidates gained faith in themselves; they reached some kind of self-confidence and certainty that they were able to pass the exam. They felt that the failure or

success depended on themselves, with the help of the teacher. The sharing of responsibility between candidates and teachers was set as one of the goals, not only to the candidates but to their parents from the onset of the course.

CHAPTER II: LEARNING STYLES

CHAPTER II: Learning styles

2.1. Definitions

As I have already mentioned, the concept of *learning styles* has become widely used not only by language teachers, researchers and the like, but among students and parents as well. While at its simplest, learning styles could be defined as the preferred way of learning, the concept can be looked at from different angles, each yielding a different definition. For example, a learning style has been described as a personality dimension which is influenced by attitudes, values and social situations. Lawrence (1984) uses the term to comprise four aspects of the person: (i) cognitive style, i.e., preferred or habitual patterns of mental functioning; (ii) patterns of attitudes and interests that affect what an individual will pay attention to in a learning situation; (iii) a tendency to seek situations compatible with one's own learning patterns; (iv) and a tendency to use certain learning strategies and avoid others.

Another perspective from which to look at this concept is that it is a method a person uses for acquiring knowledge. Litzinger and Osif (1993) describe learning styles as the different ways in which children and adults think and learn. They also imply that each individual develops a preferred and consistent set of behaviours or approaches to learning. They explain the learning process by breaking it down into several processes. The cognitive process per se explains how one acquires knowledge, whereas the conceptualization process has to do with how one processes data. For example, some learners look for connections among unrelated events, while others generate new ideas from each event.

To sum up, the individual's learning style will be influenced by several factors: the affective factor, motivations, decision making styles, the social setting, values and

emotional inclinations. It can be concluded then, that a learning style is a blend of cognitive, affective and behavioural elements (Oxford & Ehrman, 1989).

2.2. Considerations

Besides the suggestive meaning implied in the definitions of learning styles, I think it is worthwhile stressing certain considerations related to this notion. To begin with, a learning style has nothing to do with how intelligent or how skilled one is, but it concerns the way the mind (brain) works most efficiently when it comes to learning and processing new information. It has little to do with *what* a person, student or child learns, but a lot to do with *how* she learns it. It can be said that whatever the learning style, it is pervasive and innate within the learner (Willing 1988). It is safe to affirm that there is no such thing as a "good" or "bad" learning style, or that there is a "right" or "wrong" approach to learning, but that there are different ways people learn, and each learner has his own preferred way or ways of intaking and processing new data. And last, but not least in order of importance, it can be stated that success in second language learning depends on the deployment of those learning strategies that are compatible with the individual's learning style (Oxford, 1992: 42; Ellis, 1997: 73). This, again, is what I aim to demonstrate in this dissertation.

2.3. Implications

Since this study focuses its attention mainly on the relationship between learning styles and learning strategies, it may be helpful to draw some implications from the above statement. To begin with, it is advisable that a learner, in order to be successful, should, first of all, be aware of the existence of the learning process. Secondly, a learner should be familiar with her learning style and other personality factors directly or indirectly involved

in her learning process. Thirdly, she should be familiarised not only with the concept, but with the different groups of learning strategies. Lastly, the learner should actively search for, find and employ those strategies which best suit the individual's learning style. In order to become a successful foreign language learner one has to be able to take control of the language learning process at least to some extent. Becoming aware of the learning process, getting familiar with one's learning style, utilising appropriate learning strategies, and steadily searching for strategies that are suited to given tasks are all necessary steps to acquire strategic competence. These arguments will be developed in the following pages.

2.4. Classifications

Due to the openness of this subject matter, many attempts have been made to try to catalogue the ranges of learning styles. This situation was also provoked by the profusion of learning theories which were developed in the last quarter of the past century. Most of the learning style categories were drawn directly from some of the more representative schools or theories of learning. Here, we will look at and briefly comment on some proposals of learning style categorisations.

a. Kolb's theory

Kolb's (1984) theory of learning styles has been adopted for a number of applications through the administration of the Kolb Learning Style Inventory.[9] Kolb's model classifies students as having a preference for:

[9] Julie Sharp, an associate professor of technical communication in the chemical engineering department at Vanderbuilt University, has administered the Kolb Learning Style Inventory (KLSI) to her technical communication classes for at least six years.
Brigham Young University initiated a faculty training programme based on Kolb's learning styles in 1989.
Hartman (1995) proposes practical applications to laboratory practice, field work, simulations, case studies and homework based on the Kolb's model.

1) Concrete experience
2) Abstract conceptualization
3) Active experimentation
4) Reflective observation

Apparently, preferences 1 and 2 have to do with how learners take in information, whereas preferences 3 and 4 deal with how they process information. This theory seems to suggest that learning styles could be envisioned on a continuum. The learner begins from a concrete experience, where she is involved in a new experience, and passes to a reflective stage, when she observes others or develops observations about her own experience. The next stage is the abstract conceptualization; here, the learner creates theories to explain observations. Finally, in the last stage, the learner uses theories to solve problems and make decisions.

Even though Kolb's theory describes a continuum that the learner runs through over time, the emphasis is on the preference and the reliance that a learner can have on one or a combination of two learning style dimensions. Generally speaking, Kolb has identified four basic types of learners:

Type 1: The concrete-reflective learner

Type 2: The abstract-reflective learner

Type 3: The abstract-active learner

Type 4. The concrete-active learner

Type 1 learners respond well to explanations of how course material relates to their experience, interest and [their] future careers. To be effective with type 1 students, the

instructor should function as a *motivator*. Students like to be answered a characteristic question: *Why?* Type 2 respond to information presented in an organised, logical sequence and benefit if they have time for reflection. To be successful, the instructor should function as an *expert.* These learners ask a characteristic question: *What?* Type 3 do well if they are given opportunities to work actively on well-defined tasks and to learn by trial-and-error in an environment that allows them to fail safely. The instructor is effective when she functions as a *coach*, providing guided practice and feedback. A characteristic question of this type is *How?* Type 4 learners are good at applying course material to new situations and to solve new problems. With these learners, the instructor should stay out of the way, giving them the opportunity to discover things for themselves. The preferred question of this type of learners is: *What if?*

Traditional instruction focuses almost exclusively on formal presentation of material (lecturing). This style, according to Kolb`s model, appeals exclusively to type 2 learners. In order to reach other types of learners, Kolb argues that an instructor should first explain the relevance of each new topic to motivate type 1 learners. She should, then, present the basic information and methods associated to the topic. To continue, she should provide opportunities for practice in the methods already introduced in the previous stage to reach type 3 learners, and should conclude by encouraging explorations of applications and experimentation. This manner of approaching instruction was originally termed "teaching around the cycle" by its author.

b. Felder's model

An interesting proposal of categories comes from R. Felder (1995). He describes five dichotomous learning style dimensions indicating the needs and preferences of second language learners. Felder's model was derived from five questions educators commonly ask themselves:

1. What type of information does the learner preferentially perceive: sensory -sights, sounds, physical sensation, or intuitive - memories, ideas, insights? (sensory-intuitive dimension)
2. Through which modality is sensory information most effectively perceived: visual - pictures, diagrams, graphs, demonstration, or verbal - written and spoken words and formulas? (visual-verbal dimension)
3. How does the learner prefer to process information: Actively - through engagement in physical activity or discussion, or reflectively - through introspection? (active-reflective dimension)
4. How does the student proceed toward understanding: sequentially - in a logical progression of small gradual steps, or globally - in large jumps, holistically? (sequential-global dimension)
5. With which organisation is the learner most comfortable: inductive - facts and observations are given, underlying principles are inferred, or deductively - principles are given, consequences and applications are deduced? (inductive-deductive dimension)

In describing the *sensory-intuitive dimension*, Felder draws on Carl Jung's (1971) theory of psychological types as the two ways individuals tend to perceive the world around them. Sensors are keen on being concrete and methodical, like to deal with facts, data and experimentation, are patient with details but do not like complications, rely on memorisation as a learning strategy and are more comfortable learning and following rules and standard procedures. Intuitors, on the other hand, are inclined to be abstract and imaginative, deal better with principles, concepts and theories, get bored with details and welcome complications, do not favour repetition but rely on variety and exceptions to rules and are quick but may be careless.

The application of these principles produced the MBTI (Myers-Briggs Type Indicator; Myers and Mc Caulley 1985; Myers and Myers 1980) which was used to assess the learning preferences of many learners. The characteristics of sensors-intuitors in language

learning have been investigated by Moody (1988) and Ehrman and Oxford (1990). Moody administered the MBTI to 491 college language students at the first and second year levels. He found that 59% of the students were intuitors, while another survey conducted among general college students (Myers and Mc Caulley, 1985) showed that only 40% of the students were found intuitors. This discrepancy can be explained by the very nature of language which is symbolic and therefore more appealing to intuitors than to concrete and literal-minded sensors.

Ehrman and Oxford (1990) explored sensors' and intuitors' preferred learning styles and strategies in an intensive language-training programme. They found that the sensors used a variety of mnemonic strategies and preferred highly structured and well-organised classes with clear goals and milestones for achievement. The intuitors, on the other hand, enjoyed a teaching approach that involved greater complexity and variety, and appeared to be better equipped to learn independently of the instructor's teaching style.

Concerning the *visual-verbal* dimension, Felder makes an innovative distinction. For this author, visual learners are those who prefer the information in pictures, diagrams, flow-charts, time lines, films and demonstration format, while the verbal learners favour the information in spoken or written words. Felder does not include the kinaesthetic model in the sensory classification as it is not part of the senses (tactile, gustatory, smell), but rather follows Kolb's model where kinaesthetic is part of a separate learning style category: the active- reflective dimension.

The distinction between the visual-auditory and visual-verbal classification has to do with whether reading prose is more closely related to seeing pictures or hearing speech. Felder draws on the work of Martin (1978) who describes three mechanisms for the process of obtaining lexical significance from printed words: *direct access*, the reader jumps directly from the printed word to its lexical meaning; *indirect access*, in this case the words are translated internally into sounds first and consequently their meaning is located in the lexical memory; and *dual encoding* in which case lexical memory can be accessed either directly or indirectly. This research showed that direct access is possible when words are familiar to the reader, whereas in the case of unfamiliar or difficult reading material lexical

memory is speech-accessed. On the one hand, this implies that, since the majority of the expository prose that one finds in the classroom, in textbook or chalkboard forms are speech-mediated rather than directly accessed, the main learning channel adopted by students in formal learning settings belongs to the verbal category rather than the visual one. On the other hand, according to Dale (1969), most individuals obtain and retain information from visual presentation rather than written or spoken prose. This view is supported by a study conducted by Moody (1988) who surveyed a large group of college students. These were asked to rank, in order of preference, 13 instructional modes including lectures, discussions, slides, film strips and audiotapes, where audiotapes ranked at or near the bottom of the list with the great majority of students surveyed. Now, assuming that students actually favour visual stimuli instead of speech, we would have a situation where the most promising learning channel (the visual channel) is not being exploited in academic environments. It would happen, instead, that the verbal channel is extensively used which means that the lexical meaning is indirectly accessed. But besides this consideration, the main point remains that, due to the way information is presented in formal settings, written prose could not be considered as a visual stimulus but rather a verbal stimulus.

With this view in mind, Felder finds a point of discrepancy with recent studies of learning styles in foreign language education which consistently place reading in the visual category, implying that instructors can meet the needs of visual learners solely by relying on written material. Felder maintains that visual learners learn better if they see and hear words in the target language and the same happens to the auditory learners if they are presented with oral and visual material. Presenting the same material in different ways will undoubtedly reinforce and aid retention. Felder reaches this conclusion thanks to Martin's work as well as other researchers that support the hypothesis of a *dual encoding* form (Crowder and Wagner 1992).

The third dimension described by Felder is the *active-reflective dichotomy*. The active experimentation-reflective observation model is borrowed directly from Kolb (1984). Active processing involves doing something in the external world with the information,

such as discussing it, explaining it or testing it, while reflective processing involves examining and manipulating the information introspectively. Active learners learn well when they are physically involved with something, whereas reflective learners learn well when they have time to think about the information. This is an important stage of the learning process because the perceived information converts into knowledge. For this reason students should have plenty of opportunity, in a classroom setting, to both actively participate and reflect at the same time. Group work and cooperative learning seem to be the key to promote and satisfy learners' needs in this dimension.

The next dimension listed by Felder is the *sequential vs global learners*. Sequential learners absorb information and acquire understanding of material in small connected chunks, and global learners assimilate information in, apparently, unconnected fragments and achieve understanding in large holistic jumps. It seems that before global learners can master the details of a subject, they need to understand how the material being presented relates to their prior knowledge and experience. This trait could explain why global learners might appear slow or do poorly on tests, but once they grasp the information, they have the total picture and are able to see connections that escape the sequential learners. These, on the other hand, are quick in grasping information and can function with incomplete understanding of the subject but miss out on interrelationships between concepts and other disciplines.

In reference to this learning style dimension, Oxford (1990) cites studies that show a relationship between sequential-global learners and brain hemisphericity. Leaver (1986) suggests that left-brain thinkers (sequential) deal more easily with grammatical structure and contrastive analysis, while right-brain thinkers (global) are better at learning language intonation and rhythms. Sequential learners are attracted to strategies that involve dissecting words and sentences into component parts and are comfortable with structured teaching approaches that stress grammatical analysis; global learners prefer holistic strategies such as guessing at words and searching for main ideas and respond well to relatively unstructured instructional approaches.

The last dimension proposed by Felder is the *inductive-deductive learning style*. Induction is a reasoning progression that proceeds from particulars (observations, measurements, and data) to generalities (rules, laws, and theories). Deduction proceeds the other way round. As with other dimensions students may have moderate or strong preferences for one or the other presentation mode. Instructors' preferences, however, seem to lean towards the deductive side, as a large proportion of material presentation is primarily and exclusively deductive, despite the fact that there is considerable evidence that incorporating a substantial amount of inductive teaching promotes effective learning.

c. Field dependence vs field independence

Another very celebrated way of conceptualising learning style is through the contrastive pair of *field dependence vs field independence*. Witkin *et al.* (1981) propose this distinction considering that a contrast can be drawn between analytic and holistic individuals. Individuals who fall in the analytic sphere are usually better equipped to separate a problem into its components and focus on the most significant elements when faced with decision making. They can decompose a whole into its component parts, transform and in general manipulate them independently of one another. In the field of language learning analytic people can easily identify the linguistic elements, separate the essential from the inessential, and establish relationships among its components. At a perceptual level, field independent personalities are able to distinguish figures as distinct from their backgrounds: they see the tree, but do not see the wood.

Field dependent people, in contrast, are likely to be less analytic, to perceive situations as wholes, and to depend on external frames of reference for making judgements. On the personal side, field dependent people are thought to be sociable, person-oriented and warm. Thanks to these qualities, they are likely to capitalise on social encounters, to which they are naturally attracted, and develop their linguistic skills with high-quality interaction. They are likely to receive good quality, relevant input and to offer the same, resulting in great opportunities to use the language to express meaning. At a perceptual level, field

dependent individuals experience events in an undifferentiated way: they see the wood but do not see the tree. Studies (Messick, 1978) have shown that field independent individuals learn more effectively under conditions of intrinsic motivation (e.g., self-study), in contrast with field dependent personalities who seem to be influenced more by social reinforcement.

d. Pask's model

A similar classification of learning styles is described by Pask (1975). Pask's model is based on the conversational theory. The fundamental idea behind this theory is that learning occurs through conversation about a subject matter. Such conversations can take place at any level: natural language, in the form of a general discussion, or specific language, in the form of discussing a certain topic. According to Pask, the best way to learn and process new information is to establish relationships among the concepts that make up a subject matter. Students, he insists, should identify the main concepts of the subject matter to be learned and establish links among them. One way of facilitating such accomplishment is through the use of the 'teach-back' technique. The application of this method implies that the learner teaches back what she has learned, this way understanding is facilitated by explicit explanation or manipulation of the subject matter. While observing students involved in this task, Pask identified two different types of learners: the serialists and the holists. Individuals who tend towards the serialist side progress through an entailment structure in a sequential fashion, looking for 'horizontal' relationships; whereas individuals who are inclined to the holist band proceed through establishing relationships in a hierarchical, 'vertical' manner.

e. Oxford's learning style model

Another categorisation comes from R. Oxford (1992) who assigns four major dimensions to learning styles. Some dimensions are characterised by a dichotomy that describes an

aspect of learning styles: *the analytical-global aspect, sensory preferences, intuitive/random-sensory sequential learning* and *the orientation toward closure or openness* (Oxford, 1990; Oxford, *et al.* 1991). These style aspects, among other factors (see chapter III), determine in a significant way the individual's choice of language learning strategies. Let me briefly examine the different peculiarities of each one of these dimensions.

The *analytic vs global* aspect acquires major importance in that learners fall into two opposite bands. The analytic student tends to concentrate on grammatical details, likes contrastive analysis, rule-learning, dissecting words and sentences, and would rather have the information exactly right. In contrast, she tends to avoid free-flowing communicative activities, she does not like to guess without sufficient time to reflect, and she does not favour compensation strategies like paraphrasing when she does not know the meaning of a word. The global learner, on the other hand, is keen on all these modalities, but sometimes lacks concern for accuracy and pays little heed to details, while these attitudes are typical of the analytic learner.

The second category has great importance as well since it addresses the preferred physical channels with which the learner feels more comfortable when learning. These channels are usually referred to as the *visual, auditory* and *kinaesthetic/tactile*. Visual learners like to read and obtain a great deal of visual stimuli. They prefer written material, pictures, symbols, colours, but have a difficult time with lectures, conversation and oral instruction, which could be anxiety producing if not backed up by visual support. Auditory learners, on the other hand, feel very comfortable in those settings where lectures, oral interaction and instructions predominate. Hands-on learners find it difficult to sit at a desk for too long without using their hands or body as learning channels. They need to use objects, make collages, flashcards and move around the room. Some studies (see Reid, 1987) report that, sometimes, sensory preferences of students vary according to culture. Reid found that Asian students are highly visual, whereas Hispanics are often auditory, while other cultures that are non-Western favour hands-on learning styles.

A third learning style consists of *intuitive/random learning vs sensory/sequential* learning. Learners who belong to the first group of this category think in abstract, non-sequential ways, and are able to make out the main principles of how the new language works. They find it boring to follow concrete, step-by-step learning and would rather take daring intellectual leaps. On the contrary, sensory/sequential learners are fond of step-by-step procedures, like concrete activities organised in a linear way. Their progress is slow but steady; they move on at their own rate but are capable of achieving learning goals.

The final aspect of learning styles is *orientation to closure*. These students are hard-working, organised, planful and have a strong need for clarity. They want lesson directions and grammar rules to be clearly spelled out. Such students avoid spontaneous conversations and games in the language classroom, unless they have adequate time to prepare for the activity. Students who are less oriented towards closure are known as 'open' students. They take language learning far less seriously than the other group. They conceive language learning like a game, something to have fun with and they tend not to bother with planning, organising or preparing activities or learning strategies. Because of their relaxed attitude, these students do better in developing fluency, compared to closure oriented learners, but find it more difficult to cope with highly structured classroom settings. I would like to synthesise the learning style models introduced above in a table so that at a glance we can spot the similarities and differences that exist among them.

Table 1.

Comparison of Learning Style Models

MODE	RANGE	MYERS-BRIGGS	KOLB	FELDER	OXFORD
ORIENTATION TO LIFE	Extrovert-Introvert	X			
PROCESSING	Active-Reflective		X	X	

PERCEPTION	Concrete-Abstract		X		
DECISION MAKING	Feeling-Thinking	X			
PERCEPTION	Sensing-Intuitive	X		X	X
ATTITUDE TO OUT. WORLD	Judging-Perceiving	X			
INPUT	Visual-Verbal			X	X
ORGANIZATION	Inductive-deductive			X	
UNDERSTANDING	Sequential-Global			X	X
TOLERANCE OF AMBIGUITY	Openness-Closure				X

2.5. About the learning style classification scheme

From the above illustration it appears difficult to establish the validity or lack of validity of one model compared to another. What seems to be certain is that one model alone can probably not encompass all the possible combinations of learning modes that learners carry within them. It is reasonable to assume that no two learners are equal in the combination of learning style characteristics, and that all learners differ in these characteristics. Researchers have made a big effort in the attempt to include in their models as many learning characteristics as possible. A proof of this is that so many learning style classifications have been proposed. Apparently, up to 32 different learning style categories have been put forward. Unfortunately, as we can suspect, not one classification mode can ever comprise all learners' characteristics. If we observe the learning style mode table above, we see that some dimensions in one classification model overlap with dimensions in another model, while the rest of dimensions take a totally different direction. At this point, the legitimate question may arise whether the attempt to classify learning styles is useful at all. A probable answer would still be yes, since the adoption of one or more learning style categorisations may serve as a guideline for

teachers. These, however, have to pay attention not to fall into the trap of placing all students into one or another range and teaching each student according to his or her preferred style.

In conclusion, while it seems improbable that anybody can devise a classification model that includes each and every individual learner's characteristics, it appears likewise improbable that a teacher can develop and adopt a teaching style designed to match *each* student's learning style. Even if that were possible, it certainly would not be desirable or advantageous for learners, since they would lose out on engaging in activities that could activate and develop other learning style dimensions. Thus, a functional solution would lie in a balanced teaching style that addresses all levels and styles. If instructors care to orchestrate their teaching instructions so as to address both poles of each of the dimensions of any model proposed, they should come close to providing an optimal learning environment for most students in a class. This leads us to the next subject matter discussed in the upcoming space.

2.6. Pedagogical implications

Persistent exposure to teaching methods that result in a constant mismatch of teaching styles with learning styles will inevitably provoke stress, frustration and burnout among students who are subjected to such a situation (Smith & Renzulli, 1984). Studies have shown that matching teaching styles to learning styles greatly enhances academic achievements, students' attitudes and students' behaviour. Such studies were conducted at the primary and secondary school level (Griggs & Dunn, 1984; Smith & Renzulli, 1984), at the college level (Brown, 1978; Charkins et al, 1985) and specifically in foreign language learning (Oxford et al, 1991; Wallace & Oxford, 1992). This does not imply that the best thing an instructor can do for her learners is to adopt a teaching style for each individual learner exclusively. Learners, eventually, will constantly be called upon to deal with learning problems which require the deployment of their less preferred learning modes and should, therefore, be given practice in those learning styles regularly.

Educational psychologists would probably find no point of dispute about students learning more when the information is presented in a variety of modes than when only a single mode is used. This point is supported by a research study carried out some years ago, which concluded that students retain 10% of what they read, 26% of what they hear, 30% of what they see, 50% of what they see and hear, 70% of what they say, and 90% of what they say and do (Stice, 1987).

Fonseca Mora (2002) writes on the same lines and advocates an eclectic approach in the foreign language classroom. She bases her arguments on the principle that each learner is a unique blend of many components. All the learners bring with them elements from different domains: sensory preferences, cognitive aptitudes, social skills and personality factors in the target language classroom. The combination of all these components is very personal and unique. For this reason, teachers in the foreign language classroom have to present a variety of tasks and approaches to cater for all types of learners. She draws on Gardner's (1983) multiple intelligence theory to give the learners the opportunity to find out their real potential in art, music, sports, verbal and analytical skills. In his last publication Gardner (1999) identified nine intelligences that comprise the human cognition. According to Fonseca Mora the foreign language classroom has to propose a wide range of possibilities in order to place learners in a position to see and develop their capacities and at the same time reduce as much as possible the learners' limitations.

Oxford (1990) argues that the most effective second language teaching is achieved through a balanced instructional approach, where all the learning modes are orchestrated simultaneously or sequentially in a class setting. Instructors' teaching approaches are made up of those methods they feel most comfortable with. If instructors were forced to shift to unfamiliar, awkward or uncomfortable methods, results would be disastrous for students and teachers alike.

Fortunately, teachers seem to be endowed with the sufficient plasticity to adapt to almost any style with no need to make drastic changes. In general, teachers already address the needs of some of the learning style categories that we have mentioned in this chapter, so what is necessary really is that teachers organise their activities keeping in mind that their

students can be analytical or global, visual, auditory or tactile, intuitive or sequential, inductive or deductive, and reflective or active. Teachers should try those techniques that work and abandon or try out at a later time those that do not yield results. In this way they will allow a natural style to evolve eventually that could satisfy both learners and teachers.

2.7. Conclusion

The acknowledgement that learning is not simply a natural and spontaneous process has triggered a series of studies that have eventually led to the recognition that learners learn in different ways and, as a consequence, to the enunciation of the definition of learning styles. Even though discrepancies still exist among theorists and practitioners as to the number of ways in which learning occurs, or to the criteria according to which these learning paths should be classified, we cannot deny the influence that the appearance of the concept of leaning styles is having in the educational panorama. We must admit that learning styles have contributed to a great extent to the change of focus from teaching to learning in modern times. By shifting attention to the learning process, learners have taken on a new role and teachers have become more perceptive to the learning process in general. Furthermore, as we shall see in the next chapter, the introduction of the notion of learning styles has made the employment of learning strategies more effective for teachers and learners. In conclusion, we have to say that the introduction of the principles and applications of learning styles in the classrooms has generated a dramatic positive effect on the overall quality of learning and teaching.

CHAPTER III: LEARNING STRATEGIES

CHAPTER III: Learning strategies

3.1. Definition: A multiple view

Since the publishing of *The Good Language Learner* (Naiman *et al*, 1978), where the leading question was: What strategies do successful learners adopt? (Ibid: ix), other researchers have followed suit in search of what effective learners do to be successful. During the last quarter of the past century many issues have emerged. Some of these have generated wide support among investigators, while others have remained controversial. For example, there seems to be a tacit agreement among learning strategy researchers as to what to investigate, while there also appears to exist a lack of consensus regarding the concept of learning strategies. As the situation stands today, ‘‘the concept of *strategies* is a somewhat fuzzy one and difficult to tie down’’ (Ellis, 1994: 529; Dörney and Skehan, 2003; Dörney, 2005). Generally speaking *learning strategies* are those steps taken by learners that make their learning more effective and whose results are visible in terms of target language proficiency. Learning strategies are viewed as general tendencies or overall characteristics of the approaches and techniques used by a language learner in her attempt to master a second language (Stern 1983). Weinstein and Mayer (1986) highlight the mental aspect of this phenomenon when they point out that learning strategies are the behaviours and thoughts that the learner engages in. Chamot (1987), on the other hand, stresses the observable and voluntary aspects of learning strategies when she describes them as observable techniques, approaches or deliberate actions that the students take, in order to promote learning. Oxford (1989: 40) views them as “specific behaviours or techniques” that students engage in to facilitate their learning.

Another definition of learning strategies is any set of operations or steps used by a learner that will facilitate the acquisition, storage, retrieval or use of information (Dansereau, 1984; Rigney, 1978). In language acquisition they pertain to “activities in which the learner

may engage for the purpose of improving target language competence" (Bialystok 1983: 101). Politzer (1965:18) sees the successful language learner as "essentially the pupil who has devised a successful self-teaching method. This learner may systematically apply strategies to different language learning activities such as comprehension, oral production, or vocabulary." Ellis (1994: 529) defines a learning strategy as "consisting of mental and behavioural activity related to some specific stage in the overall process of language acquisition or language use." More recently, "a learning strategy is any behaviour, thought, or action a learner engages in during learning that is intended to influence the acquisition, storage in memory, integration, or availability for future use of new knowledge and skills" (Weinstein & Hume, 1998: 12). In a revision of an earlier (1992/93) definition of learning strategies Oxford *et al* state that:

> Learning strategies are the behaviours, steps, or techniques that the learners consciously use to aid in attending to and rehearsing language material, mentally manipulating it to create increasingly complex connections, embedding it in long-term memory, and retrieving it when needed (Kaway, Oxford, & Iran-Nejad, 2000: 47).

In a questionnaire run among international scholars, who are particularly involved in the field of strategies, in June 2004, question 4 asked to respond to the following definition of 'strategies':

> Strategies can be classified as conscious mental activity. They must contain not only an action but a goal (or an intention) and a learning situation. Whereas a mental action might be subconscious, an action with a goal/intention and related to a learning situation can only be conscious (Cohen, Macaro, 2007: 31).

Only a small number of surveyed accepted the definition in those terms. One partly agreed, but the majority rejected the definition in its totality. Apparently, the controversy resides in the concepts of 'conscious' and 'mental activity'. These varied definitions reveal the complexity of the subject matter and the different perspectives from which it can be viewed. Some authors advocate the psychological view, while others support the behavioural view or even perhaps the neurological view.

In this panorama a safe and maybe functional way to come up with some stable data about this topic is to try to list the main characteristics of learning strategies, as suggested by Ellis:

1. Strategies refer to both general approaches and specific actions or techniques used to learn an L2.
2. Strategies are problem-oriented. The learner deploys a strategy to overcome some particular learning problem.
3. Learners are generally aware of the strategies they use and can identify what they consist of if they are asked to pay attention to what they are doing/thinking.
4. Linguistic strategies can be performed in the L1 and in the L2.
5. Some strategies are behavioural while others are mental. Thus some strategies are directly observable, while others are not.
6. In the main, strategies contribute indirectly to learning by providing learners with data about the L2, which they can then process. However, some strategies may also contribute directly to learning.
7. Strategy use varies considerably as a result of both the kinds of task the learner is engaged in and individual learner preferences.
8. The strategy choice is influenced by a variety of factors (Ellis, 1994: 532).

Some of these characteristics can be deduced straight from the definitions provided above, whereas other points will emerge in the course of the discussion about learning strategies which will take up the whole of this chapter. Nevertheless, before moving on to tackling the relationship between learning styles and strategies, it is useful to look at some issues that pertain to the field of strategies and that have emerged all along the period in which research about strategies has taken place.

3.2. Issues related to the concept of strategies

As was just illustrated, from the varied versions offered by the authors cited [and quoted] above, serious discrepancies exist about the authentic nature of learning strategies. The same conclusion was reached at a not so recent (May 2003) conference about Second

Language Teaching and Learning held at Alcalá University.[10] This state of affairs has generated a series of controversial issues in reference to the terminology used and other aspects. Cohen (1996: 2) has identified a number of problematic areas and has tried to provide clarification. These areas have to do with the following issues:

1. Terminology and basic concepts in the field of strategies.
2. The conscious or unconscious nature of strategies.
3. The concept of strategic competence.
4. Differing criteria for classifying strategies.
5. Linking strategies to learning styles and other personality-related variables.

Each one of these issues will be dealt with separately in the hope of reaching some clarification so that, on the one hand, future use of the terms in question refers unmistakably to its correspondent concept, and, on the other hand, by quoting the contributions from different authors, we can get a wider view on this subject and its aspects.

3.3. Terminology and basic concepts in the field of strategies

In the relatively brief history of the second language learning literature, quite distinct terms have emerged in reference to the concept of learning strategies. Terms like *technique* (Stern, 1983), *tactic* (Seliger, 1984), *move* (Sarig, 1987), the split between *macro*-and *micro*-strategies and *tactics* (Larsen-Freeman and Long, 1991), *substrategies* and other similar expressions have been circulating not only among the authors mentioned, but a great number of other professionals as well.

This state of affairs can be understandable if we consider the richness of meanings embedded in the concept of strategies. This term has, in fact, been used to refer to

[10] During the conference, more than one speaker maintained that the concept of learning strategies is still somewhat unclear. Sarah Jane Hill presented a paper about the lack of consensus in the definition of learning strategies. The speaker concluded that the study of learning strategies is characterised by a general disagreement about its theory and nature, especially in reference to its definition, concept and classification.

general approaches and to specific actions used to learn a second language. For example, a general approach could be that of forming concepts and hypotheses about how the target language works. A more specific strategy could be that of listing different classes of strategies in order to better reading skills, such as skimming or/and scanning, in the new language. Among other strategies aimed at improving reading could be the use of coherence-detecting strategies. More specific than that, the use of summaries could be included in order to comprehend reading passages. To be even more specific, it could be indicated that the summaries have to be learner-generated, rather than supplied by the author. Finally, a very specific strategic action could be that of writing ongoing summaries in the page margin in telegraphic form (Cohen, 1996: 5). While still acknowledging that there is a continuum from the broadest categories to the most specific actions, a solution to this terminological problem would be to refer to all of these as *strategies.*

Similarly, the expression "language learning strategies" is employed to refer to those strategies that assist learners in improving their knowledge of the target language. Very frequently, however, strategies are employed for performing in and using the new language. Furthermore, strategies have been employed in communication tasks and to compensate for lack of knowledge or breakdowns in communication. Even in a more specialised form, strategies serve for exercising in different macro-skills areas such as reading, writing, speaking and listening, and for coping with difficult elements of the new language such as class presentations or taking tests. This new and broader range of meanings (compared to its original conception) of the expression *learning strategies* has motivated the adoption of *learner strategy* as a new expression coined purposefully to comprise this varied strategic behaviour of learners (McDonough, 1999: 2). With the expression *learner strategies*, therefore, the learner is not viewed as a simple participant in the language learning process, but as a problem-solver and an efficient organiser of the knowledge and skills of the new language. In other words, the term *learner strategies* encompass both second language learning and second language use strategies (Cohen, 1996; 2007).

Another term frequently used in the study of strategies is the expression *learner training*. This can be defined as a set of procedures or activities which raise learners' awareness of what is involved in the process of learning a second language, which encourage learners to become more involved in and responsible for their own learning, and which help learners to develop and strengthen their strategies for language learning (Hedge, 1993: 92).

3.4. The conscious or unconscious nature of strategies

Another unresolved issue refers to the absence of consensus as to whether strategies need to be conscious in order for them to be considered strategies. Among the definitions of learning strategies quoted in the first section of this chapter, the word 'consciously' appears only in the last definition given, while in other definitions words such as 'steps' or 'actions' are found. Even though the idea of being conscious is not expressed explicitly in all definitions, one is inclined to think that a minimum of consciousness should be present in order to activate learning strategies. Bialystok (1990) argues that strategies would usually be considered part of the conscious, voluntary behaviour of learners, but this datum has yet to be confirmed. Part of the difficulty lies in the vagueness of the concept of consciousness. Schmidt (1994) sheds some light on the topic. According to him, consciousness has four components: *intention*, *attention* (focal and peripheral), *noticing*, which suggests the element of awareness, and *understanding* (control). From this perspective, it seems obvious that all strategies, cognitive or metacognitive, can be comprised within these four conceptual domains. Moreover, he maintains that if it could be stipulated that language learning strategies are within the focal attention of the learners, or within their peripheral attention, then we can speak about strategies. But besides the psychological aspect of consciousness, there is a pragmatic approach to this issue. The key to discover whether the approaches are within the focal or peripheral attention is to ask learners to describe what they have just done. If they can identify the specific behaviour or action, then it would be identified as strategy. On the other hand, if the learner's behaviour or action is totally unconscious so that it cannot be identified, then it will be referred to as a process. For example, a learner may use the behaviour of skimming a portion of text in order to avoid a lengthy illustration. If the learner is at all

conscious, even if only peripherally, as to the fact that the skimming is taking place, then it can be considered a strategy.

This same view is shared by Ellis (1994: 532) who points out that even though some authors do not make a specific reference to the conscious or unconscious nature of strategies "our focus will be on learning strategies as conscious or at least potentially conscious actions which learners employ intentionally". Additionally, he highlights that if strategies are internalised to a point where the learner is no longer conscious of employing them, and therefore are not accessible for description through verbal report, they lose their significance as strategies.

3.5. The concept of strategic competence

Early references to the concept of strategic competence, as a component of communicative language use, put the emphasis on compensatory strategies. Canale & Swain (1980: 30) argue that strategic competence is employed to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to performance variables or to insufficient competence. More recently strategic competence has acquired a broader theoretical framework. Bachman (1990) extends the scope of strategic competence to embrace the *assessment, planning* and *execution* components. In other words, strategic competence is called into play not only when the language user encounters difficulties in maintaining the communication flow, but to set communicative goals, to retrieve the relevant items from the language competence and plan their use, and to execute the planned communicative action.

This amplified concept of strategic competence will not impede that a great deal of strategic activity among second language learners will continue to be compensatory. Most probably, non-native speakers will persist in omitting material that they do not know, or will produce different material from what was intended with the hope that it will be acceptable in a given context, or even resort to lexical avoidance, simplification or approximation. Yet, much of the strategic behaviour that falls under the rubric of strategic competence in Bachman's model is not compensatory. The model includes metacognitive strategies for assessing the language needed to perform the given task, cognitive strategies for selecting appropriate language structures, when these are available to the non-native, strategies for executing the plan, and finally post-task assessment strategies.

The fact that the concept of strategic competence has been widened to encompass non-compensatory behaviour clearly indicates that the previous definition was too narrow. It would be interesting, now, to observe to what extent the new framework is able to reveal the strategic competence of non-natives.

3.6. Differing criteria for classifying strategies

The classification of learning strategies has especially been characterised by differing views. This conflict results from the fact that distinct criteria have been used to classify language learning strategies, causing inconsistencies and mismatches across existing taxonomies and other categorisations. We can see, from the numerous definitions of learner strategies, that some strategies contribute directly to learning, while others aim at using the language. Some strategies, especially action strategies, are easily observable; others are mental and behavioural and not easily observable, while others are simply mental and, therefore, not accessible, unless other means, such as verbal reports are

used. Sometimes, strategy frameworks have been developed on the basis of degree of explicitness of knowledge such as linguistic vs world knowledge or form-focussed vs meaning-focussed knowledge (Bialystok, 1978; Ellis, 1986).

Furthermore, strategies are sometimes labelled as belonging to successful or unsuccessful learners. However, this distinction has been found misleading since whether a strategy is successful or not depends on the characteristics of a given learner, on the language task, and even on the learning context, or a combination of these. This conclusion was reached in a study (Chamot *et al.*, 1987b) which showed, among other results, that 'effective' learners used a greater range of strategies, compared to the 'less effective' ones. And especially, it showed that 'effective' learners demonstrated greater ability in the choice of strategies that proved more appropriate for particular tasks (see also Oxford & Ehrman, 1989).

According to Ellis (1994: 539), Oxford provides the most comprehensive classification of learning strategies. Originally, she proposed a classification scheme based on whether the strategies were considered primary or support strategies. Within this taxonomy she included virtually every strategy previously mentioned in the literature (Ellis, ibid.). The Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) was devised by Oxford (1986) thanks to the content found in the above classification scheme. The original taxonomy was amended and re-proposed (1990) with a general distinction between direct and indirect strategies. Direct strategies were further divided into three subcategories: memory strategies, cognitive strategies and compensation strategies. These strategies directly involve the target language and require mental processing of the language (Oxford, 1990). On the other hand, indirect strategies were split into metacognitive strategies, affective strategies and social strategies. These three subcategories of strategies were useful since they provided support through focussing, planning, evaluating, seeking opportunities, controlling anxiety and so on. The direct-indirect taxonomy has finally developed into a classification scheme where strategies are memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective or social.

DIRECT STRATEGIES

I. Memory Strategies

A. Creating mental linkages

B. Applying images and sounds

C. Reviewing well

D. Employing action

II.Cognitive Strategies

A. Practicing

B. Receiving and sending messages

C. Analysing and reasoning

D. Creating structures for input and output

III. Compensation Strategies

A. Guessing intelligently

B. Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing

INDIRECT STRATEGIES

I. Metacognitive Strategies

A. Centering your learning

B. Arranging and planning your learning

C. Evaluating your learning

II. Affective Strategies

A. Lowering your anxiety

B. Encouraging yourself

C. Taking your emotional temperature

III. Social Strategies

A. Asking questions

B. Cooperating with others

C. Empathising with others

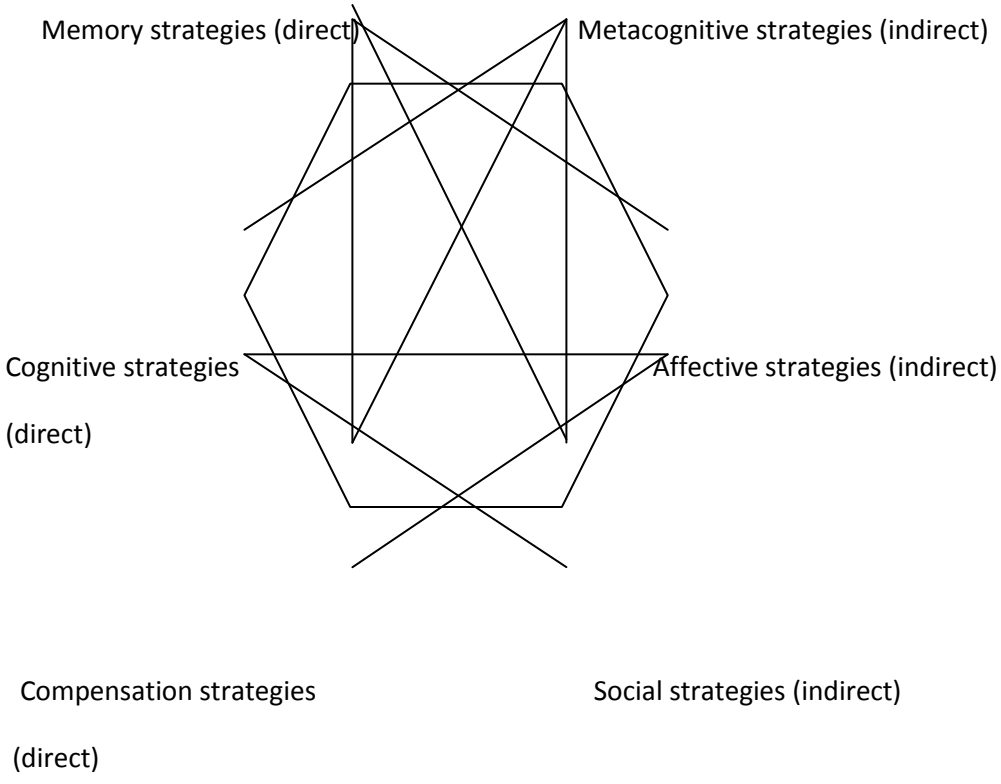
(Oxford, 1990: 16-21)

Due to the thoroughness of this classification and considering that the concept of strategies is the heart of this research paper, it is worthwhile taking a closer look at the types of strategies and strategy groups, as well as at the strategies themselves. Many of the strategies appearing in this classification are being used by the participants in the two studies that make up the second part of this dissertation. The next section, therefore, will be dedicated to the description and analysis of the strategy classification proposed by Oxford.

3.7. Classification of strategies according to Oxford.

Oxford claims that the classification of learning strategies proposed by her is different from other systems in that not only it is more comprehensive and detailed, but it links systematically individual and group strategies with each of the four basic language skills. The following figure is meant to illustrate this concept graphically.

Figure 1



(Source: Oxford, 1990:15)

According to this conception, even though the whole body of strategies is divided into two groups (direct and indirect) and there exists a subdivision into six groups and a further

division into subgroups, all the strategies are linked and support each other (Oxford, 1990: 15). The figure shows that all the groups are interconnected, which leads to the idea that every single strategy belonging to one group can be aligned with another strategy from any other group. This view is very reassuring and makes a lot of sense because it confers freedom to choose and orquestrate a whole array of strategies to suit the learner, the task at hand and the learning situation.

So, the next lines intent to explore in depth the direct and indirect strategies, the three groups of the direct strategies and their subgroups, and the indirect strategies with their groups and subgroups.

3.7.1. Direct strategies.

Oxford refers to direct strategies as to all those strategies that involve the target language. They all employ mental processing but the purpose and the way the process takes place vary. Memory strategies, for example, serve to help the learner store and retrieve new information. Cognitive strategies, on the other hand, are useful to help the learner understand and produce new language; whereas compensating strategies allow the learner to use the target language despite her limitations (1990: 37). Therefore, direct strategies are divided into memory, cognitive and compensation strategies.

3.7.1.1. Memory strategies

Memory strategies are divided into four sets: creating mental linkages, applying images and sounds, reviewing well and employing action. Creating mental linkages, in turn, has three strategies: grouping, associating/elaborating and placing new words into a context (1990: 39).

Grouping. In order to facilitate remembering new language items, learners can find useful to classify or reclassify language material. For example, vocabulary can be grouped into grammar categories (nouns, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, etc.), or language functions (expressing ability, apologising, requesting, etc.), or even topics (games, the time, work, leisure time, etc.), similarities, opposites, and other groups. It is also a good idea to label

the group, to coin an acronym to remember the group or to colour code the different groups. These devices will help to strengthen the power of the strategy (Oxford, 1990: 40). This strategy links directly to the Gestalt Theory (refer to page 135).

Associating/Elaborating. This strategy deals with relating new language items to concepts already in memory, or to relate one concept with another. The aim is to create an association between two or more language items. For example, if one has to learn the name of a new sport, she/he can associate it to football if it is a team's game, to tennis if it is an opponent's game, or to swimming if it is an individual's competition game. Sometimes the association can be more complex; for example, if the language to be learned is the word 'leek', the association can be: leek – onion – bulb – root – soil – garden – land etc. Whatever the connexion, it must be meaningful to the learner (Oxford, 1990: 41). This strategy corresponds to the first strategy of the use of English strategy list : *In preparing for paper 3 I learn not just single words but whole phrases.*

Placing New Words into a Context. This strategy is similar to the one above with the difference that instead of associating the new language with another word or words, it is linked with a context. The context can be a sentence, a conversation or a story (Oxford, 1990:41). This practice is very common when learning vocabulary and is an exercise often proposed by the language practice book (Vince, 2003) used for the preparation of FCE candidates. It also corresponds to strategy six of the use of English strategy list: *I never leave any blank spaces unfilled.*

The next set of strategies proposed by Oxford is applying images and sounds. The author includes four strategies in this set: using imagery, using keywords, semantic mapping and representing sounds in memory. These all involve remembering by means of visual images and sounds.

Using Imagery. This strategy has to do with relating the new language to concepts in memory by means of meaningful visual imagery, which can be either in the mind or in an actual drawing. This image can be an object, a set of location, or a mental representation of the letters of a word.

Semantic Mapping. This is a useful strategy in that associations, grouping and meaningful imagery converge. Here, a set of related words are arranged into a drawing with a key concept at the centre or at the top and with other words and concepts linked to the central one by means of lines or arrows.

Using Keywords. This strategy helps remember a new word by using an auditory and visual links. The first step is to identify a familiar word in one's own language that sounds like the new one. This would be the auditory link. The next step is to generate an image that has a relationship between the new word and the known word. This would be the visual link. Both links must be meaningful to the learners.

Representing Sounds in Memory. This is a useful strategy where the new word is memorized according to its sound. The idea is to create a sound-based association between the new language item and the familiar one. For example, the word *pan* in Spanish, meaning bread (something you eat), and the same word in English (something you cook in).

The next set of strategies is Reviewing Well. The author includes only one strategy in this set *Structured Reviewing*. It is based on the principle that looking at the new information only once is not enough; it must be reviewed in order to be remembered. The revision is structured at carefully spaced intervals. Once learned a new language item, it should be reviewed after ten minutes; then, after twenty minutes; the next revision should take place after four hours, then two days later, two months later, and so on. The idea is to go back to what has already been learned while at the same time learning new information.

The last set of memory strategies is Employing Actions. There are two strategies in this set. The first one is *Using Physical Response or Sensation.* This strategy involves acting out the new word. Action verbs are easily learned by performing the action or seeing the action being performed. Drinking, singing or playing the piano can be performed in the classroom or the sensation of cold or hunger can visually be represented. This strategy is especially useful for very young learners. The Total Physical Response (TPR) method is a complete teaching method based on this strategy (Oxford, 1990: 242, note 15).

The second strategy is *Using Mechanical Techniques.* This strategy involves devising tangible ways to organize items of the target language. For example, writing items on flashcards and keeping them in one pocket. Practice with them on the way to school or on the way back home, and once learned put those flashcards in the other pocket. Or use a notebook where some pages are used to write verbs, others to write nouns, adjectives, prepositions, and so on.

3.7.1.2. Cognitive strategies

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, another group of direct strategies is cognitive strategies**.** According to Oxford (ibid.: 43) these strategies are essential to learning a new language. They are numerous and varied and they all have one thing in common: when learners use them they are manipulating and transforming the target language. This author classifies these strategies in four sets: practicing, receiving and sending messages, analysing and reasoning, and creating structure for input and output. They are very practical for language learning and they form the core of all strategies especially the strategies included in the first set. According to Oxford, of all the startegies maybe the practice strategies are among the most essentials to learn a new language. In this set we find five strategies: repeating, formally practicing with sounds and writing systems, recognising and using formulas and patterns, recombining, and practicing naturalistically.

Repeating. In order to learn a new language the most instinctive and natural thing to do is trying to imitate the sounds and forms of the new language. Learners do this through repetition. They say or listen to something over and over again and they rehearse trying to imitate the native speakers. This strategy appears in the reading strategy list proposed to the participants in the second study: *I practice intensive reading paying attention to details.* It also appears in the listening strategy list as the first strategy.

Formally Practicing with Sound and Writing Systems. With this strategy students practice the sounds of the new language system in a formal context and they do the same with the writing system of the target language. There are a great deal of strategies in the reading,

listening and use of English strategy lists that can be included in this set (see appendices 5A-5F). These strategies are vital for a learner who wants to move on with the target language, this is why strategies in this set have been proposed under different forms.

Recognizing and Using Formulas and Patterns. This strategy consists in becoming aware and using set formulas such as "How are you" or "Have a good weekend", etc., and patterns like "I'd like to____." or "If you____, I'll _____." This strategy intends to make learners aware that the target language is composed of set phrases and patterns and that it is convenient to spot and learn these structures in every learning situation.

Recombining. When learning a new language, with this strategy, learners practice combining new elements with known ones to produce longer structures. They also learn to use connectors to link one sentence with another in a variety of ways. This strategy is included in the use of English strategy list proposed to the participant in the second study, disguised under different wordings. For example, (i) strategy four: *I also practice grammatical pattern and collocation as an important part of knowing the meaning.* (ii) strategy twenty-five: *I am aware that I need to master a wide range of structures such as reported speech, passive voice, conditionals, verb tenses as well as modal verbs.* (iii) strategy thirty-four: *I practise combining words to come up with a new meaning.*

Practicing Naturalistically. This is probably the most useful strategy in this set of strategies. When learners use this strategy they practice the target language in a natural and realistic setting as it could be intervening in a conversation, or reading a book or article, listening to a lecture, songs or watching a film in the target language, or writing a letter or emails. The teachers of English in the English Department at the school where the study took place made a point of using and encouraging the use of the target language in every environment of the school: the corridors, the canteen, the playground, and of course the classroom. The reason behind this idea is precisely having recognised the importance of using the target in a natural and meaningful way.

The next set is receiving and sending messages. In this set only two strategies are proposed: *getting the idea quickly* and *using resources for receiving and sending*

messages. As regards to the first strategy, when reading, learners use the skimming technique to determine the main idea, and the scanning technique to find specific details of interest. These two strategies in particular have been constantly proposed to the participants in the second study when dealing with the three parts of the reading paper (see the Study II section 8). Then, when listening to a lecture, learners jot down the main idea only. Concerning the second strategy, learners use print or nonprint resources to understand incoming messages or produce outgoing messages.

The *analysing* and *reasoning* set of strategies is related to the analytical aspect of foreign language learning. The author includes five strategies which, when used, aid the learner in understanding the meaning of new expressions and in creating other expressions (1990: 46).

Reasoning Deductively. It is the first strategy and comprises learning the rules of the target language and applying these rules to the various learning situations. It is a top-down strategy that goes from general to specific. This is strategy thirty-two in the use of English strategy list: *I try to find out the rule(s) behind a given structure.*

Analysing Expressions. The other way around would be going from specific to general. This strategy implies that the learner has to break down a sentence, an expression or a word into its parts in order to understand its meaning. This strategy is called analysing expressions. This strategy is included as number thirty-three in the in the use of English strategy list.

Analysing Contrastively. But the learner can reach understanding of the target language also comparing elements of the target language with the elements of the first language. These elements may be vocabulary, sounds, grammar and syntax. Comparing elements of the two languages is very helpful to determine similarities and their differences. This strategy has been labelled analysing contrastively.

Translating. Another strategy, which has been popular and widely used, is translating. Translating can be both ways: from the native language to the target language and vice versa; the learner who applies this strategy can translate one word, an expression, a

sentence, or a whole text. When he translates from her native language, the learner uses her first language as the basis for understanding and/or producing another.

Transferring. The last strategy proposed in this set is transferring. With this technique the learner transfers her knowledge of words, concepts or structures from one language to another with the purpose of understanding or producing the new language (1990:47).

When learning a new language the learner has to find ways to create structures, which is necessary for both comprehension and production in the new language. For this reason oxford proposes creating structures for input and output. This set contemplates three strategies: *Taking Notes, Summarizing* and *Highlighting.*

Taking notes. This strategy is used when the learner wants to write down the main ideas of a speech, lesson or conference, and also to fix specific points. But it can also be used to make a list of objects, to draw a semantic map, or to take notes in a T-form.

Summarizing. This is useful to make a long passage shorter or to write an abstract of an article or another piece of prose.

Highlighting. Highlighting helps the learner focus on certain parts of the written text. This can be done by underlining, starring, or colouring (colour coding) the main parts of a passage (1990: 47)

Cognitive strategies are probably considered the bulk of all strategies especially when the learner has already achieved a certain level of proficiency in the target language. But before reaching that point, the learner must have used a lot of compensation strategies to make up for her limited knowledge in her understanding and production in the target language. This will be the last group of *Direct Strategy* as proposed by Oxford.

3.7.1.3. Compensation Strategies

These are strategies that enable learners to use the target language despite their limitations of knowledge and skills in the target language. They are proposed here to make up for the inadequate repertoire of vocabulary, structures, and grammar. The author suggests ten strategies divided into two sets: *Guessing Intelligently in Listening and*

Reading and *Overcoming Limitations in Speaking and Writing*. Guessing intelligently in listening and reading comprises two strategies.

Using linguistic clues. The first one is using linguistic clues. This strategy allows the learner to guess the meaning of what is heard or read in the target language, in those situations where there is total lack of knowledge of vocabulary, grammar and structures. The learner can make sense of what he reads or hears relying on language-based clues from her first language or other languages. The strategy lists include a few strategies of this set. For example, strategy nine of the CAE use of English strategy list: *I look at the title of the passage.*

Using other clues. The second strategy of this set is using other clues. When using this strategy, the learner looks for and uses clues that are not language-based in order to capture some meaning in absence of knowledge of vocabulary, grammar or other linguistic elements. The sources of these clues may be varied. The learner may know the context or the situation, or the text structure; maybe the clue can come from personal relationship, the topic, or general world knowledge. For example, for somebody who doesn't know any Spanish and sees "rebajas" on shop windows can easily guess the meaning of the word to be *sale,* or *discount.*

The next set of compensation strategies is overcoming limitations in speaking and writing. There are eight strategies in this set. Some refer to both speaking and writing, but some are dedicated only to speaking.

Switching to the mother tongue. This strategy is a way of going around a word or expression unknown by the speaker. This way the speaker is still saying something and hopes to be understood by the listener. A variation of this strategy is adding endings from the target language onto words from the mother tongue. For example, the Italian word *aggiustare* meaning *to fix, to mend* is blended with *ing* to become *aggiusting.*

Getting help. Another way to go around difficulties is *Getting Help.* In this case the speaker asks the listener or another person to provide the word or expression in the target language. *Mime and gestures.* Still another way is to use mime or gestures. Here the

speaker instead of using the verbal expression, resorts to gestures or mimes to express the meaning.

Avoid communication partially or totally. When not sure how to express an idea, the speaker may avoid communication partially or totally. This could mean avoiding certain topics, or certain expressions, or leaving the utterance half way, but it can go as far as avoiding communication in general.

Selecting the topic. Similarly, the speaker who is unsure about certain topics will direct the conversation to the areas where she feels most comfortable with. So, here the strategy is selecting the topic.

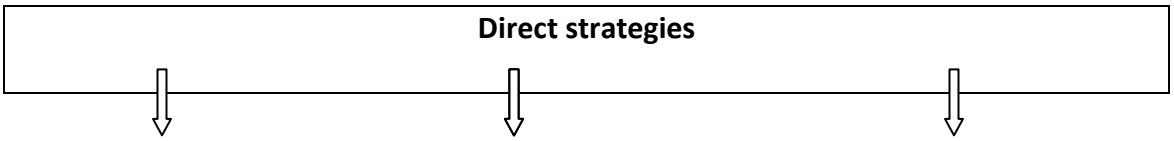
Adjusting or approximating the message. On similar lines, the speaker can alter the message by manipulating it or leaving part of it out in an attempt to simplify the message or approximate it. This strategy is adjusting or approximating the message.

Coining Words. Another common technique used by novel speakers of a target language is coining words. It is almost inevitable when looking for a term that is not known or escapes memory to invent or make up a new word or expression. Expressions like *footing* instead of jogging or *suntaking* instead of sunbathing are examples of these.

Using a Circumlocution or *Synonym.* The last strategy of this set is using a circumlocution or synonym. Sometimes, when the word is not available to memory the best way to get the message across is describing the word with a different expression. If the word *key* does not come to mind, the speaker can say: "it is that thing you open the door with". Other times, the use of a synonym comes handier, as in the case of *siesta* instead of nap or rest.

This completes the categories, groups and sets of the direct strategies proposed by Oxford. The table below synthesises the ten sets of direct strategies. In the next section I'll give an overview about the Indirect Strategies for general management of learning as proposed by Oxford.

Table 2



Memory strategies	Cognitive strategies	Compensation strategies
Creating mental linkages	Practicing	Guessing intelligently
Applying images and sounds	Receiving and sending messages	Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing
Reviewing well	Analyzing and reasoning	
Employing action	Creating structure for input and output	

3.7.2. Indirect Strategies.

The strategies about to be discussed are called indirect because they serve as support and help manage the learning process without directly involving the target language. They work together with the direct strategy but do not take part in the learning process as such. These are useful in all language learning situations and can be applied to the four language skills. Oxford (1990: 135) categorizes these strategies in three groups: the metacognitive, the affective and the social groups.

3.7.2.1. Metacognitive Strategies

Metacognitive strategies are actions that the learner undertakes that go beyond, beside, or with the purely cognitive devices, and which provide a way for learners to coordinate their own learning process (1990: 136). These strategies are essential for successful language learning and are used in conjunction with the direct strategies. It may happen that the learner could be overwhelmed by so much novelty as new vocabulary, unknown grammar rules, different writing systems and unfamiliar social rules. This situation can cause the learner to lose her focus. When this happens, the conscious application of metacognitive strategies such as paying attention, organizing, setting goals and objectives and other strategies help the learner regain control over the learning process (1990: 136).

Oxford divides these strategies in three sets: Centering your Learning, Arranging and Planning your Learning, and Evaluating your Learning. Here is a brief description of those strategies included in these sets.

Centering your Learning. Three strategies are found in this set. They are meant to help learners converge their attention and efforts on certain language tasks and skills. The first one is *Overviewing and Linking with Already Known Material.* This strategy is recommended when preparing for an upcoming activity or skill development. Learners should review the key concepts related to the activity, build up the vocabulary and make the connection. Three steps are indicated for this strategy: understand why the activity is done, build the necessary vocabulary and make the association.

The second strategy is *Paying Attention.* Here, learners make the conscious effort to pay attention to language tasks *in general* (*directed attention)*, while at the same time they ignore all kinds of distracters, and concentrate on *specific aspects* of the langage or learning situation *(selective attention)*. More than one strategy of this sort was used by learners in the first and second study; for example, strategies nine, ten and twenty-three in the reading strategy list, and strategy ten, sixteen and twenty-one of the listening strategy list.

The last strategy of this set is *Delaying Speech Production to Focus on Listening.* Some learners may decide to delay their speech production, partially or totally, until their listening and comprehension skills get better. Not all learners may find this strategy useful. This strategy is very typical in the Total Physical Response (TPR) method. Learners use their body to perform actions but are compelled to speak if they do not feel like it.

Arranging and Planning your Learning. This set includes six strategies, all of which help learners organize and plan their activities in order to get the most out of their learning.

The first strategy is *Finding out About Language Learning.* Learners of a new language should develop an inquisite mind as regard to how language learning works. They should read books about it, talk to the teacher or other people, and then apply what they learn to their personal learning situation.

The second strategy is *Organizing.* Here learners are invited to find out the optimal learning conditions for themselves. This includes organizing one's schedule, the physical environment such as the temperature, the sound, the light, the time of the day or night, the learning material (whether visual, acustic or kinaesthetic) and the people some learners may need to study with.

The third strategy is *Setting Goals and Objectives.* Learners should learn for an aim. It is more motivating to establish long and short term objectives and employ all the means at one's disposal to reach them. For example, a learner can set for herself the short-term objective to practice the use of prepositions in English over the weekend, or to formulate a long-term objective to sign up for a summer course to improve her speaking skills. In the case of the participants in the two studies the objectives were clearly spelled out: the first on-going objective was to aquire the reading, speaking, listening and writing skills with the sufficient proficiency level to face the FCE or the CAE examinations; and the second objective was to obtain the FCE or the CAE diploma.

The fourth strategy is *Identifying the Purpose of a Language Task.* It is very useful to ask oneself why I am doing this or that task, or what the purpose of this or that language activity is. For example, a learner can decide to watch a film in the target language to practice listening comprehension. But before seeing the film she should write five, six or more questions related to the film, and be able to answer those questions to test her comprehension. With the participants in the two studies, the instructor made sure that the candidates knew the reason behind some activities or exercises.

The fifth strategy is *Planning for a Language Task.* This strategy comprises a number of subsequent steps. First, the learner should be able to describe the task; second, to decide what is required for that task; third, to check one's own resources; and lastly, to establish additional elements or functions necessary for the task or situation.

And the last strategy in this set is *Seeking Oppotunities for Practice.* A pro-active language learner needs to create opportunities to practice the target language. These may range from talking to the language teacher outside the classroom, to going to a party where the

language is spoken, or finding a girlfriend or boyfriend who only speaks the target language. The strategy lists provided to the participants in the two studies suggest various strategies of this sort (see appendices II and V)

Evaluating your learning. This is the third set of the metacognitive strategies. There are only two strategies in this set *Self-Monitoring* and *Self-Evaluating.* The first one has to do with learning from errors and the second one has to do with evaluating overall progress.

Self-monitoring aims at identifying those errors that impede the correct reception or the appropriate creation of the message and trying to eliminate such errors. On the other hand, *Self-Evaluating* is meant to measure how much one has improved in different skills. For example, in how much time one is capable of reading a book, or how much of its content one has understood, or how long one is capable or maintaining a conversation in the target language compared to three months ago or a year ago.

3.7.2.2. Affective Strategies.

When people use the term affective, they refer to the wide range of emotions, values, attitudes and motivations. All these influence to a great degree foreign language learning. It is, therefore, paramount for a language learner to be able to control these factors. Affective strategies are introduced to serve that purpose. These strategies become even more important if we consider that the affective side of learning encompasses such varied concept as self-esteem, attitudes, motivations, anxiety, culture shock, inhibition, risk taking, fear of failure, beliefs, opinions, prejudices, tolerance for ambiguity and others, and they are connected like a network (1990: 140). Negative feelings about language learning will definitely inhibit progress. On the other hand, those who experiment positive feelings about learning a new language will undoubtedly be more effective and find the experience enjoyable. Knowing and using affective strategies will give a big boost to those learners who find themselves in the process of learning a new language.

Oxford (1990: 143) proposes three sets of affective strategies: *Lowering your anxiety, Encouraging Yourself,* and *Taking Your Emotional Temperature*. The lines that follow mean to give a brief description of the strategies included in each set.

Lowering Your Anxiety. There are three strategies in this section. They all have a physical and a mental component. The first one is *Using Progressive Relaxation, Deep Breathing, or Meditation.* Progressive relaxation involves tensing and relaxing, alternately, all the major muscles of the body including the facial muscles and the neck. Deep breathing is exactly that: to breathe deeply from the diaphragm. And meditation is done by mentally focussing on an image or sound. The next strategy is *Using Music.* Most people are familiar with the soothing effect that music, especially classical, has on the human soul and mind. So, going to a concert or playing background music at home are excellent ways to relax. The last strategy in this set is *Using Laughter.* Laughter has a therapeutic effect on people's moods. So any means that provokes laughter, like watching a funny film, reading a humorous book, or listening to a joke would serve the purpose.

Encouraging Yourself. Encouraging oneself is probably one of the most forgotten thought among people in general and language learners in particular, as most of us expect encouragement from an external source. Little do language learners know about how powerful self-encouragement may be and how effective this push that comes from the inside the learner may result in a learning situation.

This set includes three strategies: *Making Positive Statements, Taking Risks Wisely,* and *Rewarding Oneself.* Self-encouragement includes saying or writing positive statements to oneself. For example, if a learner has understood most concepts at a lecture, she should say to herself: *I understood almost everything the teacher said today*. Or even more general thoughts such as: *I am a good language learner* (1990: 186).

The second strategy, *Taking Risks Wisely*, means pushing oneself to take risks in a learning situation, knowing that mistakes can be made, but those risks can be mitigated by good judgement.

The last strategy in this set is *Rewarding Yourself.* After a successful language outcome, learners should grant themselves a valuable reward. If they have performed well in a language skill or successfully completed a language task, learners should allow themselves a break.

Taking Your Emotional Temperature. There are four strategies in this set. These strategies are meant to help learners discover how they feel about language learning and why they feel that way. They are particularly helpful in that they aid learners in discerning negative attitudes and emotions, especially those that impede language learning progress. Once learners are aware of these negative emotions, they are more able to control them. Oxford proposes the following strategies: *Listening to Your Body, Using a Checklist, Writing a Language Learning Diary,* and *Discussing Your Feelings with Someone Else.*

In the first strategy the body is seen as a mirror. Depending on whether learners are experiencing positive feelings, the body will reflect happiness, calmness, security and pleasure. On the other hand, the body may reflect a stressful situation when the person experiences worry, fear, anger or somatic symptoms like body sweat or blushing. All these are signals that learners should pay attention to and provide remedies to the negative ones.

The second strategy recommends using a checklist to discover feelings, attitudes, motivations, and so on, concerning language learning in general and specific language tasks.The third strategy invites learners to write a language learning diary or journal to keep track of events, accomplishments, sensations, emotions and all that can occur that is worth noting down in the process of learning a new language.

The last strategy of this section suggests that learners should discuss their feelings with other people. This does not mean that one has to reveal their feelings to the first person they come across. Normally, one would choose a trustworthy person such as a teacher, a friend or a relative. In fact, talking to someone about how one feels about language learning, can help discover and resolve negative feelings, or, if it is the opposite case, reinforce and consolidate the positive feelings one may experience about language learning.

Oxford (1990: 143) reports that very few studies have analysed the frequency and use of affective strategies, but those that have, reveal that an incredible small number of learners make use of these strategies; the ratio is about one learner in every twenty. This

ratio is extremely low considering the effectiveness of these strategies, especially considering that these are indicated to the immense majority of language learners. She states that "No one can learn a language without motivation, positive attitudes and beliefs, and supportive emotions" (2011: 64). These strategies, however, should not be seen as a remedy to deep seated psychological problems, nor as a substitute to a necessity for psychotherapy or medical intervention.

3.7.2.3. Social Strategies

This is the last group of the indirect strategies as outlined by Oxford. Communication is seen as a human activity, but its concept can be extended in many directions. For example, communication incorporates a therapeutical action since language is viewed as a social need. This is especially true in psychoanalysis, where the main tenets of this science are based on the patient's ability to reveal the content of his mind. Communication, as a social activity, implies knowing a language or languages, which in turn determine a form of social behaviour. Social interaction then occurs through the use of language, and asking and answering questions are the most basic tools that make social intercourse possible. In language learning this concept could not be different. The exchange of questions and answers helps learners get closer to the intended meaning and thus aid their understanding. The sustained language exchange generates great quantity of input, which in turn indicates interest and involvement. This involvement leads into cooperation, absence of competition, and the presence of group spirit. These are the aims set for the social strategy, that they should encourage mutual support. A good number of studies have demonstrated the utility of cooperative learning strategies (1990: 146). Oxford outlines three sets of social strategies: *Asking Questions, Cooperating with Others, and*

Empathizing with Others. What follows is a description of the strategies that form each set.

Asking Questions. As the title suggests, these strategies have to do with asking questions. There are two main strategies in this set: *Asking Questions for Clarification,* and *Asking Questions for Correction.* In the first strategy learners ask the speaker to repeat, paraphrase, explain, slow down, or give examples to clarify or verify that the correct message has been received, whereas in the second strategy learners ask questions to be corrected. This asking for correction not only applies to conversations but to writing as well. The participants in the two studies were frequently invited to call on the instructor especially for clarification.

Cooperating with Others. This set of strategies also includes two strategies: *Cooperating with Peers* and *Cooperating with Proficient Users of the New Language.* Both strategies involve interacting with one or more people to improve language skills. They form the basis of cooperative language learning. The first strategy aims at including other learners in the learning process, keeping at bay impulses towards rivalry or competitiveness. This may mean working regularly with a study partner or a small group. The second strategy has a similar aim but in this case the study partner is a native speaker or a more proficient user of the target language, and the conversation is usually carried out outside the classroom.

Empathising with Others. Even this set is comprised by two strategies: *Developing Cultural Understanding* and *Becoming Aware of Others' Thoughts and Feelings*. In the first strategy learners try to empathise with native speakers by discovering and learning facts about the native speakers' culture. In the second strategy, learners empathise by observing the behaviour of native speakers in an attempt to become aware of their thoughts and feelings with the purpose to increase altruism and mutual concern.

This last description closes the classification of the indirect strategies as proposed by Oxford. The table below provides a synthesis of the nine sets that comprise the indirect strategies.

Table 3

Indirect strategies		
Metacognitive strategies	**Affective strategies**	**Social strategies**
Centering your learning	Lowering your anxiety	Asking questions
Arranging and planning your learning	Encouraging yourself	Cooperating with others
Evaluating your learning	Taking your emotional temperature	Empathizing with others

The direct and indirect strategies as depicted in this section leave the impression of completeness and all-encompassing. However, on second thought the taxonomy just proposed may reveal one or more drawbacks. In the next few lines, I would like to attempt one or two comments about this classification.

3.7.3. Criticism to Oxford's strategy classification model

Still maintaining that it may be the most comprehensive of all the classifications mentioned so far, the problem with this one is that the distinctions are not so clear-cut. The same strategic behaviour could be considered metacognitive while at the same time it can operate at a different level of abstraction. For example, skipping an example in the text, so as not to lose the train of thought, may be addressed as a metacognive strategy as being part of a conscious plan not to get distracted by details. This behaviour could also be interpreted as a cognitive strategy aimed at avoiding material that would not assist in generating a gist statement. A similar observation comes from the hand of Dörney (2005). His fundamental criticism is that the best known of these taxonomies (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Oxford 1990) includes categories in which individual items clearly overlap - for example, cognitive and memory strategies. Furthermore, Ellis, although an enthusiast

of Oxford's taxonomy model when he maintains that "the organization of specific strategies into a hierarchy of levels and the breath of the taxonomy is impressive", still points out that "the scheme is marred by a failure to make a clear distinction between strategies directed at learning the L2 and those directed at using it" (Ellis, 1994: 539).

Notwithstanding the existing classification difficulties, "considerable progress has been made in classifying learning strategies, from the early beginnings when researchers did little more than list strategies" (Ellis, 1994: 539). He points out that there are now comprehensive, multi-level and theoretically-motivated taxonomies such as O' Malley & Chamot's (1990) and Wenden's (1991) which have merited the same respect as the taxonomy analysed in this dissertation. Notwithstanding this advance, high inference is still called for in order to establish which strategy is being used and when, and also that strategies belonging to one category frequently vary, conditioned by a number of dimensions such as specificity and the extent to which they are observable. It is precisely in specifying strategies on the dimensions that are likely to be relevant for the given learners in the given context that more research is called for. Moreover, a bigger effort is needed to identify non-observable strategy use through various research methods such as learning strategy interviews and written surveys, direct observation, verbal reports, protocol analysis, diaries and log journals, language learning histories and so on.

3.7.4. Ways of eliciting strategies in empirical studies

In the first study of this dissertation (page 143), the learners were first familiarised with the concept of strategies, then, a list of strategies related to the task at hand was handed to them (appendix 1A-1D). Afterwards, the learners were asked to mark on the sheet those strategies they were using and return it to the instructor. Additionally, the instructor found out about which strategies the learners were using through oral interviews (appendix 8). In the second study, the instructor discovered which strategies were used through direct observation, especially when the reading and listening tests were given. The learning strategy interview was also used, but only with certain learners. However, the most widely used method for the two studies has been the written survey, especially in the second study. Here, clusters of strategies that had to do with a particular task

(reading, listening, grammar, and vocabulary) were put together and the list given to the participants8appedix 5). These studied them, used them and, then, reported them to the instructor.

Other studies have used different techniques to elicit the strategies used. For example, a variation of the think-aloud method was used when listening tests were given: the instructor stopped the tape and at that point the participants started to verbalize their thoughts (Murphy, 1985; Laviosa, 2000). Upton and Lee-Thompson (2001) used think-aloud protocols, and retrospective interviews to identify the strategies those learners used in a study where the objective was to find out to what extent the influence of L1 was responsible for the reading proficiency in L2.

3.8. Linking learning strategies to learning styles and other personality-related variables

The issue discussed in this section has a direct relation with the purpose of this dissertation. Very often learning strategies are being addressed as separate behaviours operating on their own. In reality, they are intimately tied to the learner's underlying learning style, to affective factors, such as anxiety and self-control, and to other factors like demographic differences such as age, sex and ethnic characteristics. All these are closely related to strategy choice (Oxford, 1989; Politzer, 1983). Thus, it is safe to assume that learning strategies cannot be fully understood outside a framework that does not include a context of learning styles, which is considered the expression of personality specifically in the learning situation (Schmeck, 1988). Schmeck encourages other researchers to view learning style and strategies as part of a more general context of personality factors such as beliefs about language learning, anxiety, self-confidence, language proficiency, creativity, motivation and so on. According to this author (1988: 179) a learning strategy disembedded from personality-related factors is "only a short-term prop for learning".

Very often, while elaborating lists of strategies, affective and social strategies are being left out. The O'Malley and Chamot (1990) taxonomy focussed on cognitive and metacognitive strategies, and partially touched the surface of social and especially

affective strategies. Major attention to these strategies was given by Oxford's (1989) taxonomy of strategies, as we have just seen in the section above, and after that the situation improved somewhat with the specialised work of a few strategy investigators such as Ely (1989), Ehrman and Oxford (1990), and Galloway and Labarca (1991). Later on, Oxford and Cohen (1992) recognised the importance of framing any study on learning strategies with personality-related, social and demographic information about the learners. They concluded that there is need for more routine collection of information on sex, ethnicity, age, degree of language learning experience, world knowledge, motivation, anxiety, beliefs, attitudes, and learning styles, along with data on the learning environment and teacher variables.

From what has been stated so far, it seems evident that information about personality factors is vital in order to instruct or suggest the appropriate strategies to learners. I fully agree with the above authors. As a matter of fact, the two studies that I am presenting in the second part of this dissertation, especially the second field study, take very much into consideration those aspects related to the learners' personality as well as to the environment in which learners study. The principle is that the more the instructor, tutor, or teacher knows about her learners, the better she can advise them on their strategic choices.

It is useful to add, however, that it is not only teachers who should know about their learners but also learners who should know about themselves, especially about certain aspects of their personality such as their learning styles. This point leads us on to the subject matter of the next chapter. There, I will illustrate the convenience of assessing the students' learning style. As will be argued, such assessment is necessary since the choice of learning strategies will depend on its outcome. The next few lines though, will be dedicated to explore in depth the inner characteristics of language learning strategies and the positive contribution of strategies to the teaching and learning community.

3.9. Features and advantages of language learning strategies

In her book *Language Learning Strategies: What Every Teacher Should Know* Rebecca Oxford makes it very clear that the main goal of language learning strategies is the achievement of communicative competence. She affirms that:

> All appropriate language learning strategies are oriented toward the broad goal of communicative competence. (...) Development of communicative competence requires realistic interaction among learners using meaningful, contextualized language. Learning strategies help learners participate actively in such authentic communication. (...) It is easy to see how language learning strategies stimulate the growth of communicative competence *in general* (emphasis in original). (...) As the learner's competence grows, strategies can act in specific ways to foster *particular* (emphasis in original) aspects of that competence: grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic elements. (Oxford, 1990: 8-9).

Convinced of the advantages of knowing and using language strategies, Oxford makes patent the inner characteristics and benefits of these in the following table:

FEATURES OF LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES

Language Learning Strategies:

1. Contribute to the main goal, communicative competence.
2. Allow learners to become more self-directed.
3. Expand the role of teachers.
4. Are problem-oriented.
5. Are specific actions taken by the learner.
6. Involve many aspects of the learner, not just the cognitive.
7. Support learning both directly and indirectly.
8. Are not always observable.
9. Are often conscious.
10. Can be taught.
11. Are flexible.
12. Are influenced by a variety of factors (Ibid., 1990: 9).

In the chapter about Learner Autonomy we have seen how important it is for anyone who sets about to learn a new language to achieve a certain level of autonomy. Language

learning strategies are the main tools to achieve such level. These become particularly important for learners because “they will not always have the teacher around to guide them as they use the language outside the classroom” (Ibid., 1990: 10). Due to the current educational system in the western world where the students are invited to assume a passive role and to the cultural milieu which encourages, even the adults, to follow in that direction, it can easily be deduced that implementing attitudes and behaviours that break with that tendency and try to shift it in the opposite direction is not only desirable but imperative. Our students today “like to be told what to do, and they only do what is clearly essential to get a good grade – even if they fail to develop useful skills in the process” (Ibid., 1990: 10). When students are self-directed they gradually “gain greater confidence, involvement and proficiency” (Ibid., 1990: 10).

In reference to the role of the teacher (see the introduction), traditionally they are expected to be viewed as authority figures that incorporate roles such as instructor, parent, manager, judge, leader, evaluator, controller and expert. With the introduction of the new vision, teachers expand their role to become “facilitators, helpers, guides, consultants, advisers, coordinators, diagnosticians and co-communicators” (Ibid., 1990: 10). All these functions will be the new role teachers assume without having to relinquish the old ones.

Concerning the observability of language learning strategies, it must be said that they are not always available to human observation. In a sense, it is only natural that this is so if one thinks of the act of making a mental association or engaging in a memory strategy. Another factor that makes strategy observation difficult is that in many cases these strategies are being used outside the classroom or away from the teacher’s sight, as it should be. However, there is a good number of strategies that can be observed and recorded.

In order for a strategy to be considered such it must be characterized by a certain level of consciousness. This aspect is part of the definition of strategy and an essential part. Paradoxically, the strategies some learners use are already employed instinctively, unthinkingly and uncritically. With proper training these strategies can be brought up to a

conscious level and in this way, learners can better evaluate the utility of those strategies (Ibid., 1990: 12). Language learning strategies are teachable. Not only that; strategy training should be an integral part of language education: "Strategy training is most effective when students learn why and when specific strategies are important, how to use them, and how to transfer them to new situations" (Ibid., 1990: 12).

Strategies are also characterised by a high degree of flexibility. They are rarely found in predictable sequences or fixed patterns. There is a great deal of individuality involved in the choice of strategy use on the part of the learner, even though in some cases, for example, in reading a passage, learners often preview the material by skimming and scanning before reading it more closely (Ibid., 1990: 13).

The decision to use one or another set of strategies actually depends on many factors. These variables can be found in the age, sex, ethnical group, learning style, personality traits, motivational level, the purpose for learning a language, the stage of learning, the degree of awareness, or the task at hand. It is generally thought that older learners generally use different strategies than the younger ones; or that the females use a wider range of strategies than the range used by males. It is easily thought that the more motivated the learner is, the more strategies and a wider range of them he will use, compared to someone who is less motivated. Furthermore, it can be said that besides motivation, awareness and level of proficiency in the target language will determine the number and efficacy of the strategies used. The more aware and the more advanced the learner is, the greater the number and more effective strategies he will employ, compared to someone with a lower level of awareness and proficiency (Ibid., 1990: 13).

Studies that demonstrate the effectiveness of using Language Learning Strategies (LLS) are numerous. I will mention a few here. The first one involves 131 students from all over the world taking an English course at an international school in Auckland, New Zeland (Allan, 1995; in Griffiths, 2008: 87). They were tested on strategy use after a period of strategy training. These students reported an average frequency of strategy use of 3.1. When the students were divided into lower level (73) and upper level (58), it was discovered that lower level students reported a lower average frequency of strategy use (an average of

2.9) than did higher level students (an average of 3.3). This value means that students used the strategies with that frequency on a scale from 1 to 5. A list with thirty-two strategies was proposed to these students. The highly frequently used strategies across all students were seven on the average. Lower level students were found to have reported using only five strategy items highly frequently, while the higher level students reported using fifteen strategy items at this rate.

Another study showing the effectiveness of word-level and metacognitive strategies was reported by Kitajima (1997). The study involved US university students of Japanese. The instruction was in identifying reference in text, which involved strategies at syntax and discourse level. The experimental and control group both attended a fifteen-week course four sessions per week. The results were measured for identifying references and for reading comprehension. The experimental groups achieved higher results in all the post-tests, but not equally high in both comprehension and referent recognition. The design and results suggested that students could successfully learn to use a strategy presented in an instruction program, and that improved comprehension might be achieved at the same time, although a causal link could not be demonstrated.

The next two studies mentioned here were carried out at the school where I work and are part of the empirical research of this dissertation. I would like to give a brief description of their results. The first one was carried out in 2003/04. Two groups preparing to sit the FCE examinations were studied. The first group was made up by twelve boys aged between thirteen and seventeen. The second group was composed by eight learners about the same age as the first one, but six of them were girls. The study collected data concerning their preferred learning styles, the types and amount of strategies used, and the scores they obtained in the tests given during the period of the study and the mark the learners scored in the final official exam. The studied reported that nine of the twenty participants presented these characteristics:

- These participants selected and employed learning strategies that matched their learning style preferences.
- These participants' deviations registered values above the mean. This finding is important since it indicates that the performance of these participants outstrips that of other participants.
- The number of strategies used by these participants, with few exceptions, was superior to the rest of the participants.
- The deviation values of these participants recorded upward trends in at least one task.

These observations may not be conclusive towards the hypothesis that we are testing, but they certainly provide evidence that the use of appropriate strategies brings about better language learning outcomes.

The second study analysed two groups of learners as well. Both groups counted on twelve participants and were all boys, but one group was preparing to sit for the FCE and the other group was preparing to sit the CAE. This time the learners were selected to form two homogeneous groups concerning sex, age, motivation, intelligence, prior knowledge, attitude and other variables. The study aimed at measuring the learners' performance in reading and listening tests against: i) the class average; ii) the passing mark established by Cambridge ESOL; iii) and the tendencies of the scores, whether they had an upward or downward trend. The findings can be summarised in the following statements:

1. Those learners (8) who used a greater number of strategies that suited their learning styles obtained score values above the class average.
2. These same learners scored values above the minimum required by Cambridge ESOL to pass the test.
3. Not all these learners can be said to have an upward trend.

4. Those learners (3) who used no strategies or very few strategies obtained in their tests marks below the class average, also below the threshold passing grade established by Cambridge ESOL and their trend was downward.
5. Only one learner who used a great number of strategies suitable to his learning style obtained results similar to the above three learners.

In the CAE group the findings are very similar to the FCE group. So once again, the observation is that even though we cannot state in a conclusive way that the strategies are responsible for the better marks of the learners who use them, we face the undeniable reality that when strategies are employed more skills and more knowledge ensues. The literature has not been able to pin down the mechanisms of why this happens. It is probably in this direction that future research needs to be addressed.

CHAPTER IV: TEACHING METHODOLOGIES

CHAPTER IV: Language teaching methodologies

4.1. Introduction

This chapter will deal with language teaching methodologies. I have chosen to describe the most widely known and used teaching methodologies, in the first place, because they represent a very tangible aspect of language teaching. Secondly, as we will see in the course of this chapter, with very few exceptions, every teaching methodology stems from or is based upon one or more learning theoretical principles. This observation is of prime interest to us since the learning principles and tenets form the basis of this study. And thirdly, we cannot speak about the learning side of foreign languages without making reference to its counterpart which is the teaching aspect of them.

Additionally, to better understand how the several methodologies have come about and evolved, I thought it would be useful to provide some linguistic background within which the foreign language teaching methodologies can be framed. The first section of this chapter offers a brief overview of the history of linguistics for the purpose of drawing a linguistic panorama from where the language teaching methods sprang. It will be interesting to observe that parallel to the shifts of tendency in the formulation of theoretical linguistic developments, we can witness changes in the approaches of foreign language teaching. In fact, we can verify what great influence was exerted by the structuralism of Bloomfield in America in the first half of the twentieth century, as language teaching methodologies in this period, and for the following thirty years, were completely based on behaviouristic tenets. But the most significant shift in tendency concerning linguistic theory came about with the rise of the *generative/transformational grammar* by Noam Chomsky. This change meant the beginning of a theory of language which stressed the cognitive aspect of language. Even though De Saussure theorised on the same lines, it was Chomsky's work that assigned language its mental dimension. Subsequent theories and research treated language as an inner, deep mental structure, and from then on the majority of the language teaching methods have adopted cognitive approaches, even though in the

last two decades or so, the social-cultural dimension has acquired considerable importance, as well.

4.1.1. Linguistics: Definition

According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, Linguistics (Macropaedia, 1988: 49), as a discipline, studies language as a system. It investigates the nature, structure, constituent units and modification of any such system. It is called *theoretical* when it attempts to establish a theory of the underlying structure of language, and it is called *applied* when linguistic concepts are put to use for pedagogical purposes.

Looking retrospectively, we can say that many theories about the learning and teaching of languages have been proposed. These theories, normally influenced by developments in the fields of linguistics and psychology, have inspired many approaches to the teaching of second and foreign languages. So again, the study of these theories and how they influence language teaching methodology today is called *Applied Linguistics***.** *Applied Linguistics* aims, therefore, at the applications of the findings and techniques of the scientific study of language to a variety of practical tasks, especially to the elaboration of effective methods of language teaching (Ibid.: 49).

4.1.2. Historical background

The first peoples to be concerned with the nature of language were the Greek philosophers of the fifth century BC. For these philosophers it was important to discover the origin of the human language and describe the grammatical structure of the Greek language (Ibid.: 50). After four centuries the first complete Greek grammar was written. This work was so influential that it served as a base for Roman grammarians, whose work, in turn, became the basis for grammars of the vernacular languages written during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

The study of language continued through these centuries to the nineteenth century when the linguists of that time developed a method which consisted of comparing different languages in terms of grammar, vocabulary and phonology (Ibid.: 51). Through the observation and analysis of their findings, they discovered that Sanskrit, Greek and Latin were related. Furthermore, they discovered that European languages had family relationships and that most of the languages in Europe descended from a common language called Proto-Indo-

European. It was also demonstrated that, through the centuries, steadfast changes in pronunciation were responsible for the differentiation of languages.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, beginning of the twentieth century the investigation of the nature of language takes a new turn. Ferdinand de Saussure, a Swiss linguist, introduces a distinction between synchronic linguistics (the study of the various aspects of language: phonological, morphological, syntactical, semantic during a particular period of time) and diachronic (historical) linguistics based on the assumption that all languages change in the course of time (Ibid.: 53). In addition, he makes a further distinction between the *langue* (language) which Saussure describes as the unobservable, underlying structure of a language, and *parole* (speech) which he refers to as the external, sensitive manifestation of that structure. By addressing the investigation on the nature of language and its underlying structures, Saussure began a new era in the field of linguistics which is known as *structuralism* (Ibid.: 53).

Saussure's ideas supporters, however, didn't follow up on his original postulate and re-directed their investigation to empirical evidence. Structuralists of that time moved away from prescriptive approaches and looked at language the way it is. This tendency, on the other hand, manifested open weaknesses of the new approach to structuralism, since it overlooked the fact that the human language system is a mental property. This state of affairs gave rise to other theories, until the American linguist Noam Chomsky openly challenged the structuralist approach, stating that universal patterns are present in all languages. He defended that language structures are universal and common to all human beings (*Innatism*) (Ibid.: 54). Chomsky was interested in discovering the functioning of the mind through the study of language; for this reason, he highlighted the 'mental' aspect of language that structuralism had rejected.

As a result of Chomsky's work, the goal of linguistics changed once again. The claim was that linguistics should focus on the study of the unconscious language of a speaker's knowledge (competence), not on the speaker's actual production of language (performance). This new approach led to the development of the *transformational grammar* which intended to demonstrate that a set of unconscious language rules were responsible for the creation of all the grammatical sentences of a language. Knowing a language means being able to produce an infinite number of sentences never spoken before and to

understand sentences never heard before. Chomsky refers to this ability as the "creative aspect" of language (Chomsky, 1972).

The following statements by Noam Chomsky synthesise the essence of his work:

> The child, placed in a linguistic community, is presented with a set of sentences that is limited and often imperfect, fragmented, and so on. In spite of this, in a very short time he succeeds in "constructing," in internalizing the grammar of his language, developing knowledge that is very complex... (Chomsky, 1979).

These observations led him to a logical deduction which is that every human being carries within him a language system as heritage: "So the obvious hypothesis is that our language is the result of the unfolding of a genetically determined program."[11] This hypothesis forms the basis of the formulation of the *Innatism* theory, which was expressed in other ways and appeared in other publications:

> When we study human language, we are approaching what some might call the 'human essence', the distinctive qualities of mind that are, so far as we know, unique to man **(**Chomsky, 1972).

Since the publication of Chomsky's first work *Syntactic Structures* in 1957 transformational grammar has been continually evolving. Other areas of investigation in the linguistic field have taken more specialized paths, such as psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics and other related fields; for example, anthropological linguistics, computational linguistics, mathematical linguistics and others. I can dare say, therefore, that Chomsky, with his work, has generated what we can call the modern linguistic current and triggered a whole array of theories and research in the *cognitive* sphere of language. A*pplied linguistics* in turn benefits from this circumstance, as it draws from all the findings that come to light in these related fields of linguistics and establishes ways and methods to put them into use.

4.2. **English Language Teaching.**

I may not be too far off if I state that of all the academic subjects studied in our schools today, the teaching of English is the one that has been subjected to the most dramatic changes in the application of its didactic principles, especially in the last fifty years. While

[11] Noam Chomsky, Interview to KBS TV, Kyoto, Japan

the teaching of maths, chemistry, history, etc. has remained, to a greater or lesser extent, stable, this is hardly the case with the teaching of English and other foreign languages in general. Along with the description of these changes in the tradition of teaching English, I would like to address to some milestones in the evolution of the methodology of the English language teaching. This constant change and search for the optimal methods in the teaching of English and foreign languages shows that this area attracts great interest all over the world, and consequently that great efforts, in terms of research, have been dedicated to discovering newer and novel methods of teaching foreign languages. What follows is an overview of the best known methods, techniques and approaches used worldwide to teach foreign languages.

4.2.1. The grammar-translation method (The classical method).

In the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when we spoke about foreign language teaching-learning, we inevitably referred to Latin and Greek as they were considered the root languages in the western world and retained the reputation of being intellectually enhancing to the learner. In the exercise of their profession, teachers focussed entirely on the grammatical rules, syntactic structures and rote memorization of the language vocabulary. Moreover, great emphasis was placed in the translation of the classics from Latin and Greek into the vernacular languages.

The method itself was based on the assumptions that language is primarily graphic, that the main purpose of second language study is to build knowledge of the structure of the language either as a tool for literary research and translation or for the development of the learner's logical capacities, and that the process of foreign language learning must be deductive, requires effort, and must be carried out with constant reference to the learner's native language (Schütz, 2002). The emphasis on achieving 'correct' grammar with little regard for the free application and production of speech is at once the greatest asset and greatest drawback to this approach (Thuleen, 1996). Despite all of these drawbacks, there are certain positive traits to be found in such a rigid learning environment. For left-brained students who respond well to rules, structure and correction, the grammar-translation method can provide a challenging classroom environment (Ibid., 1996). Therefore, it should not sound as a surprise that the grammar-translation method is still one of the most

popular and favourite models of foreign language teaching in some countries (Thanasoulas, 2002). I personally remember the German class being conducted using the grammar-translation method at university in Italy thirty years ago. Wyss (2002) reports on the same lines:

> Here in Italy, (where the writer has taught EFL and Creative English Writing at a college preparatory school for several years), the 'Classical', or Grammar-Translation Method, dominated popular language pedagogy in secondary schools and universities until very recently. This approach was developed in the early 1800s to teach Latin and Ancient Greek to secondary school pupils throughout Europe, where it persists to this day among traditional educators. With course objectives focused exclusively on the accumulation of linguistic knowledge, students are required to memorize vocabulary lists, engage in elaborate grammar analysis, and translate difficult passages by classical authors. Admittedly, the approach has been effective in achieving its aims. Thanks to the G.T. Method, many Italians can recite passages from Ovid and Virgil by heart in the original Latin, as well as handle Latin and Ancient Greek translations with impressive ease and accuracy (2002: 1).

But Italy is not the only country. Other educational systems follow this example like Germany and some parts of India. In these countries, the method has steel-belted itself against any educational reforms, and at the same time remaining a standard and sine qua non methodology. If we take a retrospective glance, we can say that its contribution to language learning has been rather limited since it focuses on a reduced aspect of the language, while doing very little to enhance a student's communicative ability in the foreign language. Among the learning theories that we are going to analyse in the next chapter none of them can be said to form the basis for this type of learning. Notwithstanding, Bandura's (1977) theory appears to have some elements of support for this method. Although Bandura labelled his theory "social learning theory" and the grammar-translation method has practically no social interaction, the first three tenets of the theory are applicable to this traditional method. The grammar-translation method calls for a lot of attention, retention and reproduction. Therefore, it trains the learner in focussing attention, but it also helps develop a capacity for retention, and lastly it encourages the learner in the reproduction of the language items learned in the target language.

Since the method provides plenty of practice translating, learners apply numerous strategies of the memory group such as *grouping* (putting together words of the same grammar category), *associating/ elaborating* (relating new language items to concepts already in

memory), and using *key words*. But this method also allows the application of strategies from the cognitive group such as *repeating, formally practicing with writing systems, recognizing and using formulas and patterns,* and *recombining.* I must say, however, that the grammar-translation method offers the perfect ground to specialize in the use of the *analysing contrastively* strategy. Thanks to this method the learner can reach understanding of the target language comparing elements of this with the elements of the first language. These elements may be vocabulary, grammar and syntax. Comparing elements of the two languages is very helpful to determine similarities and differences. Another obvious strategy is *translating.* But translating leads indirectly to another important strategy: *transferring.* With this technique the learner transfers her knowledge of words, concepts or structures from one language to another with the purpose of understanding or producing the new language (Oxford, 1990: 47). Some studies have shown that transfer is a recurrent and much resorted to strategy in foreign language learning and that those strategies used in the first language have an impact in second language learning (Erler & Finkbeiner, 2007).

To sum up, we can conclude that even though this very traditional foreign language method bans any dialogues or social-cultural encounters from its practice, it actually contributes to language learning providing the context for some strategy training and skill development. If the grammar-translation method is still a reality today, it must be for some good reasons.

4.2.2. The Direct Method.

During the second half of the nineteenth century a French man, Francois Gouin, tried to learn the German language by memorising its grammatical rules and irregular verb list, but soon found out that he couldn't communicate with the natives. He employed himself even more and memorised all the German roots, translated Goethe and Schiller and learned by rote thousands of German words only to find out that he couldn't understand what the natives were saying. After three years experimenting this way, he went back to France. There, he discovered that a three year old boy could talk French like a chatterbox. After observing the child for a while, he came to the conclusion that learning a language was a matter of transforming perceptions into conceptions and then using the language to represent these conceptions. On the basis of these insights, he developed a teaching method that he called Series Method (Thanasoulas, 2002).

About the same time, in 1878, Maximilian Berlitz developed a similar method. He introduced one of the first forms of the "direct method", which was based upon the "Natural Method". The basic tenet of Berlitz's method was that second language learning follows the same process as first language learning. According to this principle all instruction should be given in the target language. Additionally, there should be lots of oral interaction, spontaneous use of the language, no translation, and little if any analysis of grammatical rules and syntactic structures. In short, the principles of the

Direct Method were as follows:

- Classroom instruction was conducted in the target language;
- There was an inductive approach to grammar;
- Only everyday vocabulary was taught;
- Concrete vocabulary was taught through pictures and objects, while abstract vocabulary was taught by association of ideas;

The Direct Method enjoyed great popularity at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. After a period of decline, this method has been revived, leading to the emergence of a variety of methods and theories which find their beginnings in the natural and communicative elements that were pioneered by Berlitz (Thanasoulas, 2002).

The learning theoretical principles of this method can be traced to Krashen's natural method. According to this theorist second language performance operates on two independent systems: the *acquired* system and the *learned* system. The first one takes place at a subconscious level and is similar to the acquisition of the first language, whereas the learned system occurs as a result of formal instruction and the product is conscious knowledge of the target language. In the case of the direct method, I am more inclined to think that the learned system is called into play most of the time and not much meaningful interchange occurs. Krashen points out that acquisition takes place in the social, natural context of the target language, in meaningful situations which is when the oral communication skills really sip in, and this would rarely be the case in a classroom setting

of the type proposed by the Direct Method. The teaching of grammar conducted in the L2, however, coincides with Krashen when he states that:

> ...the only instance in which the teaching of grammar can result in language acquisition (and proficiency) is when the students are interested in the subject and *the target language is used* as a means of instruction (see Schütz, 2005).

One drawback I can see is that only the inductive method is used in the teaching of grammar which keeps the deductive students out. However, another positive point about the Direct Method is the teaching of vocabulary with pictures and object. This focus is very suitable for visual-non-verbal learners, while the abstract vocabulary is learned though association of ideas. This way of proceeding in the classroom calls for the employment of strategies especially memory strategies in the form of *associating/elaborating*, *using imagery*, and also cognitive strategies in the form of *repeating, formally practicing with sounds and writing systems* and most probably with compensating strategies in the form of *using linguistic and non-linguistic clues.*

4.2.3. The Audio-Lingual Method.

With the outbreak of World War II, America was faced with the necessity to train American soldiers to become orally proficient in the languages of their allies and enemies alike. At the same time, Skinner's behaviourism was breaking through in the field of psychology. Moreover, structural linguistics was the prevailing theory in the study of language. These circumstances facilitated the appearance of a new language teaching method known as the Audio-Lingual Method which remained popular from the 1940s through the 1960s (Thanasoulas, 2002).

As I said, it is based on structural linguistics (structuralism: not the structuralism intended by de Saussure, but the version implemented by American linguists such as Sapir and especially by Leonard Bloomfield who focussed on the external aspect of language *Speech* instead of the inner unobservable nature of *Language*), whose method relied heavily on observation and repetition, and behaviouristic psychology (Skinner's behaviourism).The behaviouristic psychologists formed the belief that all behavior (including language) was learnt through repetition and positive or negative reinforcement, but it also shares some of the tenets of the Direct Method which was also widely used in those days.

In short, the following points sum up the characteristics of the method:

- Dependence on mimicry and memorisation of set phrases
- Teaching structural patterns by means of repetitive drills
- No grammatical explanation
- Learning vocabulary in context
- Use of tapes and visual aids
- Focus on pronunciation
- Immediate reinforcement of correct responses (Thanasoulas, 2002).

As we can see the two methods have a lot in common. Like the Direct Method, the Audio-Lingual Method advised that students be taught a language directly, without using the students' native language to explain new words or grammar in the target language. However, unlike the Direct Method, the Audio-lingual Method didn't focus on teaching vocabulary the direct way. Rather, the teacher drilled students in the use of grammatical structures and the emphasis was totally on spoken rather than written language.

But its popularity waned after 1964, partly because of Wilga Rivers's exposure of its shortcomings with the publication of *The Psychologist and the Foreign Language Teacher*. Subsequent research by others, inspired by her book, produced results which showed explicit grammatical instruction in the mother language to be more productive. Another weakness of the method was patent because it fell short of promoting communicative ability as it paid undue attention to memorisation and drilling, while downgrading the role of context and world knowledge in language learning. After all, it was discovered that language was not acquired through a process of habit formation and errors were not necessarily bad or pernicious. But the definite decline of the popularity of this method began with Chomsky's review of Skinner's Verbal Behaviour in 1959, where its theoretical underpinnings were seriously questioned. This, coupled with the emergence of humanistic pedagogy and the shift to a more cognitive approach to language learning, which proved to be more effective, irremediably damaged the scientific credibility of the Audio-Lingual Method.

The theoretical underpinnings of this method can be found, in part, in the learning theory forwarded by Bandura's Social Theory of Learning (see chapter V). This researcher emphasizes the importance of observing and modelling the behaviours, attitudes and emotional reactions of others. He points out that the highest learning level occurs when the learner is able to observe certain behaviour or skill, decodes it into words, labels it, or

attaches images and then enacts it overtly. This process guarantees better retention compared to the simple observation. As a behaviourist, at the beginning, he advocated that the environment influences behaviour, but later he reached the conclusion that behaviour also makes the environment. At a later stage he introduced a new element: the person's psychological processes. With this he defines personality as an interaction between the person, his surrounding and the person's psychological processes. This interaction is essential because it is responsible for the retention and retrieval of language (Bandura, 1977). This pillar of Bandura's Social Theory of learning may account for the first tenet of the Audio-Lingual method: *dependence on mimicry and memorization of set phrases*. The second tenet of this teaching method can find sustain in Cagné's theory (1977) when he describes the nine events of instructions in *The Conditions of Learning*. Cagné identifies nine steps that produce those conditions where learning is facilitated. Step six asks the learners to produce the knowledge or skill they have just learned. This step includes the repetition or drilling of the behaviour in question. This repetition, according to Cagné, in the first place confirms the correct understanding of the new data, and in the second place further increases the probability of retention. With regard to the last tenet of the Audio-Lingual Method, *immediate reinforment of correct responses* can find support in Skinners' theory of Operant Conditioning. This is a method of learning that occurs through rewards and punishments for behavior. Through operant conditioning, an association is made between a behavior and a consequence for that behavior. Skinner used the term *operant* to refer to any active behavior that operates upon the environment to generate consequences. If the learner answers correctly or performs well at a task, he receives an acknowledgement in the form of "good", "well done" or a similar expression.

As with the Direct Method, the Audio-Lingual Method provides the perfect ground for the application of many memory and cognitive strategies. In the memory strategy category this method practices *placing new words into a context* as a way to reinforce and consolidate the memory of that item. Another strategy from this group is *using imagery* or *representing sounds in memory.* Strategies in the cognitive domain are numerous in this teaching method. For example, *repeating* sounds and structures is normal practice with this method, but also *formally practicing with sound and writing system, recognizing and using formulas and patterns, reasoning deductively,* and others. But strategies from the affective and social

categories are also applied here. The next section will explore the cognitive approaches to teaching and, as in the previous sections, a relationship with the learning theory will be sought and a parallel with the types of strategies used in each method will be exposed.

4.3. The cognitive approach

With his doctrine, Noam Chomsky brought about a revolution in the field of linguistics. Many linguists shifted their research towards a more humanistic approach to the issue of a workable theory in the teaching of languages. Even psychologists directed their efforts towards the affective and emotional aspect of learning. So, it is not surprising to witness an explosion of language teaching methods, ways and techniques that start from the premise that language is a 'mental' manifestation with a 'deep structure'. As a consequence, the 1970s account for a whole array of methods and ways that spread through the language teaching panorama. In this section I'm going to illustrate only the most prominent ones.

4.3.1. Suggestopedia

This method appeared in the late 70s. It was developed by Georgi Lozanov (1979), a Bulgarian psychologist, who believed that people employ only a small percentage of their mental capacity. The method is based on the insight of his research into human memory which brought to light that the most fundamental limitation of people's ability to learn is merely their own preconceptions and expectations. So, Lozanov began to work on a method that could be applied to language learning that focused on "desuggestion" of the limitations learners think they have, and providing the sort of relaxed state of mind that would facilitate the retention of material to its maximum potential. He expected to find that given the right conditions students would be able to acquire a vast 'useable' vocabulary in a short time. For Lozanov (1979: 272), the main focus of Suggestopedia sessions are 'concert' sessions which use the kinds of music thought to be able to facilitate heightened memory and the fast assimilation of facts. As a general principle, Suggestopedia applies the insights of research findings that music at about 80 beats per minute usefully facilitates 'Alpha' brain waves associated with heightened memory and the fast assimilation of facts. For this reason, Baroque music is especially recommended. In order to provide the best conditions for learning, Lozanov resorted to the use of dim lights and comfortable armchairs in the classroom, in a stress-free environment. Another characteristic of Suggestopedia was the

giving over of complete control and authority to the teacher and the encouragement of learners to act as 'childishly' as possible, often even assuming names and characters in the target language.

The theoretical bases of this learning method spring straight from the principles exposed by Carl Rogers in his book *Freedom to Learn.* With this method Lozanov exploits the teachings of Rogers in more than one way. To begin with, the creation of a relaxed and secure learning environment was originally formulated by Rogers:

> The structure and organization of the self appears to become more rigid under threat; it relaxes its boundaries when completely free from threat. [...] The facilitation of significant learning rests upon certain attitudinal qualities that exist in the personal *relationship* between facilitator and learner (Rogers, 1951: 64).

What Rogers intended was that the instructor needs to set a positive climate, a threat-free atmosphere with his learners. These conditions facilitate greatly the assimilation of new information. Another principle exploited by Lozanov was that learners need to balance intellectual as well as emotional experiences during learning. Moreover, the instructor shares feelings and thoughts with them without dominating. As a matter of fact, during the 'concert' sessions the learners, even though they hand over to the instructor every control and authority, do not see her as a dominating or superior figure and are able to relate to her freely.

As far as the use of strategies is concerned, this method advocates for indirect strategies, especially affective strategies such as *lowering your anxiety* or *encouraging yourself* and *discussing your feelings with someone else*. Even social strategies are employed in this method. For example, *asking questions for clarification* or *asking question for correction*, and *becoming aware of others' thoughts and feelings*.

This language teaching method provides some valuable insights into the power of cognition and creating/employing techniques that make students feel comfortable and relaxed, which are ideal conditions for learning any type of subjects. Unfortunately, it does not provide for the majority of language teaching environments teachers typically encounter. The dim lighting, large comfortable chairs and music selections are not readily available to the majority of schools, and these environmental factors are certainly close to impossible for very large (up to thirty-six or more students) classes. As with other methods, it does not

take account of the fact that many learners in many countries do not necessarily bring an intrinsic desire to learn the language into their English lessons. Additionally, its basic foundations in cognitive theory in some ways limit it as a method to the field of adult learning.

4.3.2. The Silent Way

Caleb Gattegno (1972) founded *The Silent Way* as a method for language learning in the early seventies, sharing many of the same essential principles as the cognitive code and making good use of the theories underlying discovery learning. Unlike Suggestopedia teachers using the Silent Way want their students to become highly independent and experimental learners. Making errors is a natural part of the process and a key learning device, as it is a sign that students are testing out their hypotheses and arriving at various conclusions about the language through a trial and error style approach. The teacher tries to facilitate activities whereby the students discover for themselves the conceptual rules governing the language (inductive reasoning), rather than imitating or memorizing them. Brown (1994: 63) expresses this as being a process whereby "students construct conceptual hierarchies of their *own* (italics in original) which are a product of the time they have invested." In addition to the idea that students become more autonomous learners and "develop their own inner criteria for correctness" (Larsen Freeman, 1986: 62), another key objective was to encourage students to work as a group - to try and solve problems in the target language together.

Based on these principles and using the prescribed techniques, it was hoped that students would eventually be able to actively use the language for self-expression, relating their thoughts, feelings and perceptions. The key features of this method are as follows:

- Learning is facilitated if the learner discovers or creates rather than remembers and repeats what is to be learned.
- Learning is facilitated by accompanying (mediating) physical objects.
- Learning is facilitated by problem-solving involving the material to be learned. (Richards and Rodgers, 1986: 99)

Cuisinere rods (small rods of varying colour and length) are typically used in this method to introduce vocabulary and syntax, along with colourful wall charts. Instruction in this method

typically starts with sounds, the basic building blocks in any language. The teacher usually provides single words or short phrases to stimulate the students into refining their knowledge of the language with as little correction/feedback from the teacher as possible.

The theoretical tenets of this method seem to be taken straight from Bruner's Constructivist theory. According to Bruner (1966) learning is an active process in which learners *construct* new ideas or concepts based upon their current and past knowledge. Learner builds up new information basing it on what they already know. Meaning and organization of the new experiences are given by the cognitive structures of the learner (her schema, mental frames, learning styles, proficiency level, etc.) which allows the learner to go beyond the information given. In his theory Bruner emphasises the importance of letting learners discover the principles by themselves, which, in his opinion, represents a sure way to learning that leads up to lasting knowledge, since "'expository' teaching, the apparent straightforward transmission of knowledge from teachers to learners, is highly problematic" (in Little, 1991: 12). But even before Bruner, Piaget taught that the child does not learn by simply listening to words or acquiring facts, she has, instead, to be directly involved in constructing and reconstructing knowledge, adding that, in order for this to happen, the child has to act on objects. This view is shared equally by Rogers when he states that "We cannot teach another person directly; we can only facilitate his learning." Then he adds: "I have come to feel that the only learning which significantly influences behaviour is self-discovered, self-appropriated learning" (in Little, 1991: 12). Montessori addresses in the same direction when she describes the *absorbing mind* of the child in La Mente del Bambino (Benedetti, 2008). She points out that the child should learn and develop in a stress-free environment and enjoy a high degree of freedom when she learns. It is this freedom that allows the child's innate creative capacity to develop. When the child is free she will devise discipline measures by herself.

As far as strategy use is concerned, this teaching approach incorporates, as part of its methodology, the use of creative and tangible techniques (*using mechanical technique)* and objects, which is a strategy listed in the memory strategy group. Another strategy comes from the cognitive group: *recognising and using formulas and patterns*. Even though not listed in the taxonomy proposed by Oxford, *reasoning inductively* is a strategy regularly used in the Silent Way. From the compensation strategy group *using other clues* is also a common strategy employed in this method. However, the Silent Way makes use of a good number of strategies from the indirect group such as *overviewing and linking with already known material*, *finding out about language learning*, *self-monitoring* and *self-evaluating*. One of the objectives of the Silent Way is to get

learners to work as a group and to solve language problems together. In this sense, still as an indirect strategy but belonging to the social strategy group, Oxford proposes *cooperating with peers* to facilitate language learning. This strategy involves working with a study partner or in a small group on a steady or temporary basis. As an additional goal, this strategy aims at avoiding competitiveness and rivalry (see chapter III).

Like almost all methods, this one has had its fair share of criticism. The method encourages the teacher to assume a distance that prevents her from providing direct guidance when at times such guidance would be helpful. It is criticized as being too focused on building structure, and misses out on cultural input through the language, and the silence of the teacher can prevent students from hearing many active models of correct usage that they may find useful. In trying to create a less teacher-orientated classroom, one may conclude that the Silent Way goes too far to the opposite extreme. A lot can be taken from the method, however, if adapted and combined with elements from other methods. Viewing language learning as an exploratory process for students is a very valuable teaching principle. Finding out for oneself is a very important part of any teaching philosophy, but not the be-all and end-all, as the teacher always remains a valuable guidance for most types of learning.

4.3.3. Total Physical Response

Towards the end of the 1960s James Asher began experimenting with a method he called Total Physical Response, which, in its basic premise, had a lot in common with Gouin's Direct Method. The method was to become well known in the seventies, and it drew on several other insights in addition to the "trace theory" that *memory is stimulated and increased when it is closely associated with motor activity*. The method owes a lot to some basic principles of language acquisition in young learners, most notably that the process involves a substantial amount of listening and comprehension in combination with various physical responses (smiling, reaching, grabbing, looking, etc) - well before learners begin to use the language orally. It also focuses on the ideas that learning should be as fun and stress-free as possible, and that it should be dynamic through the use of accompanying physical activity. Asher (1977) also had a lot to say about right-brained learning (the part of the brain that deals with motor activity), believing it should precede the language processing element covered by the left-brain.

One of the primary objectives underlying Asher's TPR methodology was that learning needed to become more enjoyable and less stressful. Asher thought that a natural way to accomplish this

was to recreate the natural way children learn their native language, most notably through facilitating an appropriate listening and comprehension period, and encourage learners to respond using right-brain motor skills rather than left-brain language processing.

Here are some of the key features of the Total Physical Response method:

- The teacher directs and students "act" in response - "The instructor is the director of a stage play in which the students are the actors" (Asher, 1977: 43).
- Listening and physical response skills are emphasized over oral production.
- The imperative mode is the most common language function employed, even well into advanced levels. Interrogatives are also heavily used.
- Whenever possible, humour is injected into the lessons to make them more enjoyable for learners.
- Students are not required to speak until they feel naturally ready or confident enough to do so.
- Grammar and vocabulary are emphasized over other language areas. Spoken language is emphasized over written language.

It seems that the original theories underlying the method, oriented around creating an effective and stress-free listening period in combination with physical responses (the same way we all began learning our own native language as babies) are the safest ones to stick to. So, Rogers' theory is called into action once again, especially in reference to 'the structure and organization of the self that appears to be more rigid under threat, while it relaxes its boundaries when free from threat'. But Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis is also relevant to be mentioned here. It is not that a low affective filter is itself responsible for learning, but that is a necessary condition for learning to take place. Krashen, however, theorized on the Natural Order as well (see Chapter V), where certain grammar structures are learned before others following a predictable order. This is why the TPR method can successfully teach certain structures at the beginning level and other structures at higher levels. For this reason it should be viewed as an almost pre-requisite technique for teaching young students or older students at beginning levels.

This method employs a few strategies as part of its ordinary class dynamic. The most important one is *using physical response or sensation* from the memory group. This strategy implies physically acting out a new expression, or meaningfully relating a new expression to a physical

feeling or sensation. From the affective group this method employs *using laughter* as a way to relax; jokes or funny comments are used to provoke laughter. *Delaying speech production to focus on listening* is another strategy used ordinarily during TPR lessons; this strategy is taken from the metacognitive group (see Chapter III).

Although admired as a method, due to its inherent simplicity making it accessible to a wide range of teachers and learning environments, it shouldn't be considered as a complete method as it would need to be supplemented with other approaches as students progress in proficiency. All in all, the method is widely acclaimed as highly effective at beginning levels, and almost a standard requirement in the instruction of young learners.

4.3.4. The Community Language Learning

In the early seventies, drawing on Carl Rogers' view that learners were to be considered not as a *class* but as a *group*, Charles Curran developed a new education model which he called "Counselling-Learning". This method relied heavily on affective factors. Currant addressed the issue of a new learning situation as having a threatening nature that caused anxiety to students who feared to make fools of themselves, especially in the adult learners. For this reason the teacher was best to assume the role of a "counsellor" instead of a teacher with the hope that the student wouldn't erect instinctive defensive barriers during the learning process. The idea was to present the teacher as an empathetic helping agent. When this approach was applied to language learning it came to be called Community Language Learning.

Community Language Learning seeks to encourage teachers to see their students as "whole" persons, where their feelings, intellect, interpersonal relationships, protective reactions, and desire to learn are addressed and balanced. But the method does not just attempt to teach students how to use another language communicatively, it also tries to encourage the students to take increasingly more responsibility for their own learning, and to "learn about their learning", so to speak. Learning in a non-defensive manner is considered to be very important, with teacher and student regarding each other as a "whole person" where intellect and ability are not separated from feelings. The initial struggles with learning the new language are addressed by creating an environment of mutual support, trust and understanding between both the learner and the teacher-councillor.

Here are some of the key characteristics of this method:

- A relationship of mutual trust and support is considered essential to the learning process.
- Students are permitted to use their native language, and are provided with translations from the teacher which they then attempt to apply.
- Grammar and vocabulary are taught inductively.
- "Chunks" of target language produced by the students are recorded and later listened to - they are also transcribed with native language equivalents to become texts the students work with.
- Students apply the target language independently and without translation when they feel inclined/ confident enough to do so.
- Students are encouraged to express not only how they feel about the language, but how they feel about the learning process, to which the teacher expresses empathy and understanding.
- A variety of activities can be included (for example, focusing on a particular grammar or pronunciation point, or creating new sentences based on the recordings/transcripts).

(AbiSamra, 2000)

However, Carl Rogers is cited here not only because he argued that learners should not be addressed as a class but as a group, but also because he was a firm believer that all human beings have a natural propensity to learn. In this respect, Rogers emphasises that this natural propensity becomes active every time a certain attitudinal quality gets established in the personal relationship between the learner and the teacher. Trust and a positive stress-free learning climate are essential components to achieve the desired learning results. This method also draws from Krashen's natural learning theory. One of Krashen's learning hypothesis is the Affective Filter. If learners are motivated, self-confident and with a low-anxiety filter, learning is more than likely to ensue. The Community Language Learning method rests upon this learning pillar as its main asset.

As far as learning strategies are concerned, this method uses *structured reviewing* from the memory strategy group. From the cognitive group they make use of *recognising and using formula and patterns* and also *reasoning inductively* when it comes to discovering grammar rules and learning vocabulary. From the compensation group of strategy this method resorts to *switching to the mother tongue* and *delaying speech production to focus on learning*. Among other strategies used from this group we find *getting help, avoiding communication partially or totally, selecting the topic,* and *adjusting and approximating the message.* But the basic strategies adopted in this method are indirect strategies from the affective group. *Lowering anxiety* is the main strategy used, although it is directed by the instructor, learners eventually come to use it on their own. In this method learners also use *encouraging oneself, making positive statements,* and *taking risks wisely.* In the strategy set *taking your emotional temperature* we also find *discussing your feelings with someone* else as part of

the routine sessions. The Community Language Learning leans on quite a few of strategies from the social strategies group as well, such as *asking questions*, *cooperating with others*, *empathising with others* and *becoming aware of other people's feelings and thoughts* (see Chapter III).

It is certainly unique in that it is one of the first methods to be developed that really focused on the feelings of the students and tried to address affective factors in learning (particularly for adult learners). Any method which stresses the feelings and independent development of the learners themselves is one worth looking at and trying out in a variety of ways.

4.3.5. The Natural Approach

In the 1980s Stephen Krashen (1983) developed a theory according to which second languages should be taught and learned in a natural way; that is, the way the first language is learned. Based on this assumption he developed a method by which instruction moved away from the traditional teaching ways and advocated an approach that focussed essentially on acquiring a language in a practical way. More precisely he made a distinction between "language learning" and "language acquisition", the first one being taught in the classroom alone, while the second one is learned using everyday situations that are likely to occur outside the classroom environment.

As part of the Natural Approach, students listen to the teacher using the target language communicatively from the very beginning. It has certain similarities with the much earlier Direct Method, with the important exception that students are allowed to use their native language alongside the target language as part of the language learning process. In the early stages, students are not corrected during oral production, as the teacher is focusing on meaning rather than form. As a matter of fact, much of the stress is placed on meaning rather than on form. Making the learner feel at ease during the learning process is one of the basic tenets of this way of learning. The approach has a lot in common with the Total Physical Response method in terms of advocating the need for a silent phase, waiting for spoken production to "emerge" of its own accord, and emphasizing the need, as I said, to make learners as relaxed as possible during the learning process.

The Natural Approach is based on the following tenets:

- Language acquisition (an unconscious process developed through using language meaningfully) is different from language learning (consciously learning or discovering rules about a language) and language acquisition is the only way competence in a second language occurs (the acquisition /learning hypothesis).
- Conscious learning operates only as a monitor or editor that checks or repairs the output of what has been acquired (the monitor hypothesis).
- Grammatical structures are acquired in a predictable order and it does little good to try to learn them in another order (the natural order hypothesis).
- People acquire language best from messages that are just slightly beyond their current competence (the input hypothesis).
- The learner's emotional state can act as a filter that impedes or blocks input necessary to acquisition (the affective filter hypothesis).
- The objectives are to help beginners become intermediates and it is designed to depend on learner needs. The means comprehensible input is presented in the target language, using techniques such as TPR, mime and gesture. Group techniques are similar to Communicative Language Teaching. Learners start to talk when they are ready.[12]

The obvious strategy used in this method is *practicing naturalistically,* from the cognitive group. This is a direct strategy and it involves practicing the new language in a realistic, natural setting. This may indicate participating in a conversation, listening to music or a lecture, watching a film or writing a letter in the target language. *Transferring* is a common strategy employed in this method. Another strategy 'naturally' embedded in this method is *associating/elaborating.* This strategy facilitates the link between the new information and the data already stored in memory. The strategies used in the TPR method are also used in the Natural approach (employing action). From the compensation strategy set this method takes *using linguistic clues* and *using other clues.* Other strategies from other groups and sets are used as well. For example, from the strategy set *overcoming limitations in speaking and writing* this method adopts *switching to the mother tongue, avoiding communication partially or totally, using a circumlocution or synonym.* All these strategies are used constantly because the emphasis is on conveying meaning rather than the correct form. We also find quite a few strategies from the indirect strategy category spontaneously embedded in the Natural Method. For example, as a matacognive strategy we have *delaying speech production to focus on listening.* But we also find *finding out about language learning, setting goals and objectives, identifying the purpose of a language task,* and *seeking*

[12] The characteristics of the Natural Approach are taken from SIL International available from: http://www.sil.org/lingualinks/languagelearning/waystoapproachlanguagelearning/thenaturalapproach.htm

practice opportunities. This last strategy is vital for this method. From the affective strategies, the method advocates for activities that keep the affective filter rather low (lowering learners' anxiety). Additionally, external encouragement and self-encouragement, like *making positive statements*, *taking risks wisely*, and *rewarding oneself*, are also part of the strategy package employed in this method. And lastly, the Natural Method promotes the *development of cultural understanding* (see Chapter III). The next teaching method about to be analysed is the Strategies-Based Instruction.

4.4. Strategies-based instruction

Following on the work of O'Malley and Chamot (1990) and Rebecca Oxford (2001), Andrew Cohen and Susan Weaver (Cohen and Weaver 2006) developed a form of language teaching which they named Styles-and Strategies-Based Instruction (SSBI). This way of language teaching was conceived keeping in mind the learner, and explicitly combines styles and strategy training activities with everyday classroom language instruction. The underlying premise of the styles- and strategies-based approach is that learners should be given the opportunity to understand not only what they can learn in the language classroom, but also how they can learn the language they are studying more effectively and efficiently. Research seems to suggest that there is a wide variety of strategies that learners can use to meet their language learning and using needs.

Styles-and Strategies-Based approach to teaching emphasizes both explicit and implicit integration of language learning and use of strategies in the language classroom. This approach aims to assist learners in becoming more effective in their efforts to learn and use the target language. SSBI helps learners become more aware of what kinds of strategies are available to them, understand how to organize and use strategies systematically and effectively given their learning-style preferences, and learn when and how to transfer the strategies to new language learning and using contexts. SSBI is

based on the following operational stages:

- Strategy Preparation – this step aims at finding out how much the learner knows about strategies in a conscious way and to encourage learners to use them correctly and systematically.
- Strategy Awareness-Raising - this step intends to raise le learner's general awareness about what the learning process consists of, the preferred learning channels, the kind of strategies that may be appropriate for the learner, the amount of responsibility the learner is ready to take on, and ways that can evaluate the learner's strategy use.
- Strategy Instruction – here, the learner is taught how, when, and why certain strategies can be used to enhance language learning.
- Strategy Practice – in this stage the learner applies what she has learned about the strategy to the content of the course. At this point the instructor makes reference to specific strategies for planning, others for executing the task, and finally to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies employed. Personalization of Strategies - in the last stage, learners personalize what they have learned about these strategies, evaluate to see how they are using the strategies, and then look at ways that they can transfer the use of these strategies to other contexts (Cohen and Weaver, 2006: 4-5).

In SSBI, it is the curriculum writers' and the teachers' role to see that strategies are integrated into everyday class materials and are both explicitly and implicitly embedded into the language tasks to provide for contextualized strategy practice. Teachers may start with the established course materials and then determine which strategies might be inserted, may begin with a set of strategies that they wish to focus on and design activities around them, or insert strategies spontaneously into the lessons whenever it seems appropriate (Ibid. pg. 5).

These strategies-based activities are designed to raise awareness about strategies, to train students in strategy use, to give them opportunities to practice strategy use, and to encourage them to personalize these strategies for themselves. Teachers also allow students to choose their own strategies and do so spontaneously, without continued prompting from the language teacher.

In 2009 I attended a five-day, forty-hour seminar in a summer institute at the University of Minnesota on Styles-and Strategies – Based Instructions (SSBI). The course was conducted by Martha Nykos, but the guest presenter was Dr Cohen who gave the introductory talk. There were twenty-nine participants coming from Europe, South America, North America, Asia and the Middle East.

On day one, besides the course introduction, each one of the participants had to introduce a partner (Cohen and Weaver, 2006: 159). We set goals for the course, for the day and for the activity at hand. We reviewed the concept of styles and strategies and we analysed the styles and strategies inventory (Ibid. pg. 13-19) that each one of us had previously filled in.

All the participants knew at this point their preferred learning styles and the most appropriate strategies. A brief history and evolution of styles- and strategies – based instruction was given. The day assignment was to start a daily journal on key meaningful points. On day two, we applied the styles and strategies approach to a vocabulary memorization exercise (pgs. 46-47). We also dealt with reading strategies (pg. 72), choosing those most appropriate to one's own style. Then, we moved on to look at the styles and strategies taxonomy (pg. 65). In the afternoon, we worked on a hands-on activity applied to reading and writing (pgs. 51-56) followed by another hands-on activity applied to lesson planning (pg. 99). The daily assignment consisted in writing the daily journal on the most meaningful experience. On day three, the learning strategies were contrasted with the teaching strategies (pg. 85). Then an activity was conducted for teachers, researchers and administrators. It dealt with the intersection of styles, strategies and motivation (pg. 91). The following activity had to do with what factors affect the choice of given strategies from the learner's strategy repertoire (pgs. 117-118). The last activity of the day was how to do a lesson planning in class (pg. 143). The daily assignment was to continue the daily journal. On day four, the activities geared towards fostering learner strategy use in cultural interaction and grammar (pgs. 127-135). Attention was also given to applying the styles - and strategies – based instruction to classroom lesson planning. The day was round up with how to design a workshop and a research project, (pg. 145), and to design our own styles – and strategies – based instruction lesson plan (pg. 169). The assignment for the following day was, of course, to complete the SSBI lesson plan that had to be presented on the following day. On the last day, a discussion was held about how to foster learner strategy use; then, the rest of the day was spent presenting our SSBI lesson planning and getting feedback from the rest of the participants. One copy of the lesson plan as well as a copy of the daily journals were handed to the instructor. The experience was enriching and really revealing as I had the opportunity to witness first-hand how the principles and tenets of the styles and strategies concepts were put into practice. Moreover, I could visualize how many styles-strategies activities could be applied to the routine teaching in the foreign languages classroom. Furthermore, considering that this training came straight from the hands of one of the creators of this teaching-learning approach, namely Dr Cohen, converted this learning experience in a very special one.

I thought it would be important to include the SSBI approach in this chapter as it has a direct link with the subject matter I am researching, and mainly because the field-work I am conducting draws from the principles and the aims stated in the literature published by the researchers mentioned in this section (Oxford, Cohen, O'Malley & Chamot). Additionally, the most recent foreign language English books already include strategies training and use as part and parcel of their syllabuses.

4.5. The Communicative Approach

The communicative approach is not a highly structured method of teaching in itself, but rather a broad assembly of ideas from a range of sources which have come to be accepted as 'good practice' by many contemporary teachers. The approach originated as a consequence of pressure for a change in teaching methods and curricula to suit the needs of non-traditional groups of learners. It became widely recognised that the grammar-translation method and other structural methods used in the 1960's and 70's, which placed heavy emphasis on meaningless pattern drills and repetitions, were inadequate to meet the needs of the new generations of foreign language learners. The new approach needed to cater for learners who could master the language for practical and useful aims and avoid the mastery of the new language for purely academic purposes.

For this reason the communicative approach focuses on language as a medium of communication, while at the same time recognising that communication has a social purpose; that is to say that the learner has something to say, solve or find out. This is why syllabuses based on this approach offer communicative opportunities from an early stage and embrace a whole range of communicative functions (asking for information, apologising, expressing likes and dislikes, etc.), notions (time, city services, leisure activities, etc.) and topics (sports, reading, shopping). Before the emergence of the cognitive approaches, languages were taught in a vacuum, for the sake of teaching a language, or for passing exams, rather than using a language for true communication (Brown, 1994).

The communicative approach emphasises the use of language for sending and receiving messages; that is, using the language actively for real purposes and in a spontaneous way. For this reason the target language is used as the normal medium for classroom

management and instruction, which in turn allows for a naturalistic language acquisition. Moreover, this teaching conception is much more learner-oriented as it caters for the learner's needs and interests. Its accent is on functional and usable language since its aim is to prepare learners for a possible encounter with the target culture and be able to cope and survive in a variety of everyday situations (Kerper Mora, 2002).

Classroom activities provide opportunities for rehearsal of real-life situations, encourage creative role-play, introduce simulations, carry out surveys and projects, while at the same time exploit pair-work and group-work. Speaking and listening skills are stressed, but reading and writing skills are not disregarded. The errors are treated as a natural part of the learning process. Teachers assume that learners trying their best to use the target language in a creative way are bound to make mistakes. For this reason overcorrection is avoided as the instructor understands that it is unnecessary and counter-productive. Moreover, grammar can still be taught, but less systematically. Teachers recognise that disregarding grammatical forms will eventually lead to breakdowns in communication.

The communicative approach seeks to personalise and localise language and adapts it to the interests of the pupils. The use of idiomatic and everyday language, even some slang words, may be more productive in the classroom. The introduction of topical items (football, car racing, etc.) with which pupils are already familiar in their own language will motivate them, arouse their interest and lead to a more active participation. It avoids age-old texts or those that do not relate to the learners' lives. Changing texts and materials regularly keeps teachers on toes and pupils interested. Classes do not need to be highly structured; some space has to be left to improvisation and spontaneity. This will keep minds more flexible and build up confidence in copying with new and unforeseen situations. The lesson content is not to be restricted to textbooks, nor are these followed literally, but are rather used as guidelines, manipulated and rendered more communicative. The teacher frees herself from the textbook and relies more on her own professional expertise. Besides, the teacher seeks the use of authentic resources such as newspapers, magazines, poems, manuals, recipes, news bulletins, discussion programmes, etc. In order to stimulate and focus pupils' attention, the teacher resorts to visual stimuli such as the use of flashcards, videos, OHP and other visual resources. All these means are vital to provoke practical communicative language. This way of conceiving the intervention of the language teacher

in the classroom clearly infers that teaching is subordinated to learning. The teacher facilitates the learning by observing the students and directing them to the learning experience.

As I already hinted at the beginning of this section the Communicative approach cannot be considered a method as it does not present a structured path, but it draws from different methods to suit the needs of the learners. As such, the theoretical underpinnings come from different sources as well. There are, however, three aspects of this approach that I would like to highlight. The first is the use of the target language as the vehicular language to interact in the classroom. The Direct Method also maintained this characteristic, but the Communicative Approach does not carry this precept to an extreme, it is more flexible in this sense. L1 is resorted to at times if the learner needs to understand a concept. This point leads us to the second aspect, which is the meaningfulness of the interaction taking place in the classroom. With the communicative approach, L2 is not taught in a vacuum. Real communication takes place in the classroom, whether it is the discussion over an issue or a topic, doing vocabulary exercises, commenting about the weather or watching a film in the L2. The third aspect is the importance that the communicative approach attributes to the social dimension of the language. The communicative approach focuses on the social interaction as a novel component while the other methods from the cognitive approach analysed so far centred on the mental dimension of the L2, This consideration leads us to Vygotsky who theorized on the role of words in the development of the intellectual faculties of the child. According to Vygotsky the social milieu of the child will determine her mental structure and her future personality features. So, by using the language in a significant way, words help form thoughts and vice versa. Vygotsky's theory of learning comprise these three aspects of the communicative approach. He states that:

> Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological) (Vygotsky, 1978: 57).

The idea is that human learning presupposes a specific social nature and is part of a process by which children grow into the intellectual life of those around them. Since children learn much through interaction, the learning environment should be designed to emphasize interaction between learners and learning tasks. The learning environment and the peer

cooperation are essential elements of learning since these awaken a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is in the action of interacting with people in his environment. Therefore, when it comes to language learning, the authenticity of the environment and the affinity between its participants are indispensable features that make the learner feel part of this environment (Vygotsky, 1978). Unfortunately, we have to assume that in many conventional classrooms these elements are often missing. We have to say, though, that when the Communicative approach has been applied, learners can count on many of the ideal conditions described above.

Vygotsky, however, is not the only researcher whose theories provide support to the Communicative approach. Piaget (1972) advocates a learner-centred focus in the classroom in the sense that the learner cannot be taught knowledge beyond her stage of intellectual development. His theory implies a readiness on the part of the learner. The learner does not assimilate knowledge as if it was a sponge, but needs to adjust the new information basing it on the existing one. For Piaget the intellectual growth involves three fundamental processes: assimilation, accommodation and equilibration. The first part occurs when new data is taken in; the second part takes place when the new data accommodates among the existing data; and the equilibration part is the result of a balance between assimilation and accommodation. According to Piaget these processes do not get triggered in an expository mode teaching, but only when the learner becomes the first protagonist of the learning process. This means that the child, pupil or student needs to explore, manipulate, experience, question and search out for oneself the answer or the solution. For Piaget activity is fundamental in the learning process:

> To understand is to discover, or reconstruct by rediscovery, and such conditions must be complied with if in the future individuals are to be formed who are capable of production and creativity and not simply repetition (1972b: 20).

The Communicative approach finds its theoretical support in Piaget's theory every time the instructor proposes activities that have to do with sentence transformation, or build up new sentences from given words or discover the rules behind a number of examples (inductive method), or recompose a story from strips. As long as the activity is mind engaging and calls for the manipulation, transformation and creation of new structures of the target language, it fits with the Communicative approach.

It is my belief that this way of teaching foreign languages finds further support from Krashen's Natural method which can be considered a replica of the Communicative Approach. Krashen, being a contemporary linguist, has contributed significantly to the teaching/learning panorama. He published extensively in the field of bilingual education, and has introduced terms and concepts such as Second Language Acquisition/Learning, the Input Hypothesis, the Monitor Theory, the Affective Filter and the Natural Order Hypothesis. If we analyse these concepts we will discover that they coincide with the learning principles formulated by Vygotsky and Piaget. For example, in reference to the Input Hypothesis, Krashen sustains that a foreign language learner progresses and improves along a natural path if the input she receives is one step beyond her current state of competence. In other words, let us consider that the learner is at stage A; then, acquisition takes place if she is exposed to comprehensible input that belongs to stage A + 1. This calls to mind Vygotsky's formulation of the 'Zone of Proximal Development' (see chapter V). Another example is Krashen's Natural Order. The concept means to suggest that the acquisition of grammatical structures follows a natural order, which is predictable. But this does not mean that the grammatical structures of all the languages follow the same order. Additionally, this order is also independent of age, social context, and the mother language background. Krashen, however, would reject any syllabus based on grammatical sequencing since the Natural Order is personal and develops when the individual is ready for that stage. He also points out that the goal is language acquisition (see chapter V). On the same lines Piaget advocates that the ability to learn any cognitive content is always related to their stage of intellectual development. Children who are at a certain stage cannot be taught the concept of a higher stage, but can only progress on a gradient scale. These theories form the basis upon which the Communicative Approach stands.

4.6. Conclusions

As we have just seen, the varied spectrum of ways and possibilities proposed by the Communicative Approach hinges upon solid theoretical underpinnings. This consideration is not limited exclusively to the Communicative Approach but to the remaining methods and ways as I have tried to demonstrate in this chapter. Foreign language teaching methods do not arise on their own, but are the product and result of investigation that follow up on one or more learning theoretical principles. Additionally, we have also witnessed that all

teaching methodologies bring with them, embedded in their formulation or procedure, learning strategies. It so happens that in most cases, the deployment of one or more strategies embedded in a method comes about in a subconscious way. The method advocates the use of one or more strategies as an integral part of its process but learners and teachers, in many cases, are not aware that they are using learning strategies.

From the content of this chapter, we can draw another conclusion. If the methods that we have analysed are supported by learning tenets taken from learning theories, and if learning strategies are embedded in such methods, we can, then, come to the conclusion that learning strategies are supported by the same learning principles that support the methods. We can further conclude that learning principles help generate teaching methods which, in turn, intertwine with learning strategies and learning style. This is the state of the art that the teaching of foreign/second languages has reached presently.

As a consequence, it would be difficult to review an English language textbook, whether of primary, secondary, high school or other, and not find in its syllabus most of the characteristics described above. For sure, the textbook approach will offer a learner-centred focus, it will suggest pair-work and group-work, it will concentrate on the development of oral skills without leaving aside reading and writing skills. It is also probable that the syllabus will include a grammar ticket in each unit and even some translation to be done, some vocabulary work and structure drilling. These activities, however, will not represent the bulk of the lessons, they will take up only a small portion of the class time. The topics will have been carefully chosen according to the group age, and more activities aiming at the development of reading, writing, listening and speaking skills will be engaged in. The textbook will also suggest a good range of learning strategies for the students to use. With this panorama language teaching and learning has become a productive undertaking for the learner and the instructor and I even dare say a fun way to achieve proficiency in the foreign language.

We arrived at this stage thanks to the dedication of many professionals in the field of foreign language teaching. From all the above, we can see that in just a few decades an enormous amount of information deriving from research in the methodological field is made available to us and systematically stored. Researchers the world over are meeting,

talking, comparing notes, and arriving at some explanations that replace past explanations. A quote from Brown (2000: ix) recites: “Our research miscarriages are fewer as we have collectively learned how to conceive the right questions. Nothing is taken as gospel; nothing is thrown out of court without being put to the test. This “test” may always change its mechanics, but the fact remains that the changing winds and shifting sands of time and research are turning the desert into a longed-for oasis.”

CHAPTER V: LEARNING THEORIES

CHAPTER V: Learning theories

5.1. Introduction

The following is a streamlined overview of the most widely known learning theories for second/foreign language learning. The description of such theories will provide us with a useful framework in which we can insert the learning styles and strategies. Moreover, gaining insight into learning theories will allow us to refer to them when we instruct our learners in the use of learning style and strategies. But even more important, we will come to realise that the ways students take in new information and the strategies they use to enhance their learning have a theoretical support behind them. Thanks to this theoretical support instructors and learners can test, search and eventually find workable applications that once transferred to the dynamics of the classroom may results in more effective learning.

The first part of this chapter intents to describe and analyse with a certain degree of depth the basic tenets of the theories formulated by Vygotsky, Piaget and Krashen, whereas, the second part exposes in a much briefer manner the principles formulated by other authors, who have, nevertheless, seen their theories applied in numerous institutions, are the basic pillars of numerous widely acclaimed teaching methods, and still serve as basis for curricula planning and implementation.

5.2. Lev A. Vygotsky

5.2.1. Background

A big contribution to the development of learning theories was given by the Russian psychologist, philosopher and linguist Lev A. Vygotsky. Even though he developed his theory on developmental psychology in the first half of the 20th century (he died at the age of 38, in 1934), his work was not known in the western countries until very late in the second half of the century. Nowadays, much of what is being achieved in the field of learning is an application of his theoretical assumptions of the learning processes.

5.2.2. Thought and language, and intellectual development

According to Vygotsky language plays a fundamental role in the development of the intellectual faculties of a child. He assumed that at a very early age thought and language do not develop at the same rate. But at a certain moment around the age of two, the curves of development of thought and speech, until then separate, meet and join to initiate a new form of behaviour. Here, thought undergoes many changes as it turns into speech. It does not merely find expression in speech; it finds its reality and form. This is when thought becomes verbal and speech becomes rational. This can be seen when a child first seems to use language for superficial social interaction, but at some point this language goes underground to become the structure of the child's thinking. There is a fundamental correspondence between thought and speech in terms of one providing resource to the other. For Vygotsky language becomes essential in forming thought and determining personality features**.**

Here are some quotes which express the essence of Vygotsky's work:

> Words play a central part not only in the development of thought but in the historical growth of consciousness as a whole. A word is a microcosm of human consciousness. [...] A word devoid of thought is a dead thing, and a thought unembodied in words remains a shadow. Thought is not merely expressed in words; it comes into existence through them. [...] The speech structures mastered by the child become the basic structures of his thinking. [...] The structure of the language one habitually uses influences the way he perceives his environment (Vygotsky, 1962; in Schütz, 2004)

5.2.3. Further studies on thought and language: The Russian school.

Following Vygotsky's formulation of the theory of language other Russian scientists addressed the correlation between language and thought. Ljublinskaja (1955) conducted an experiment with children between 12 and 30 months of age, where they were given two

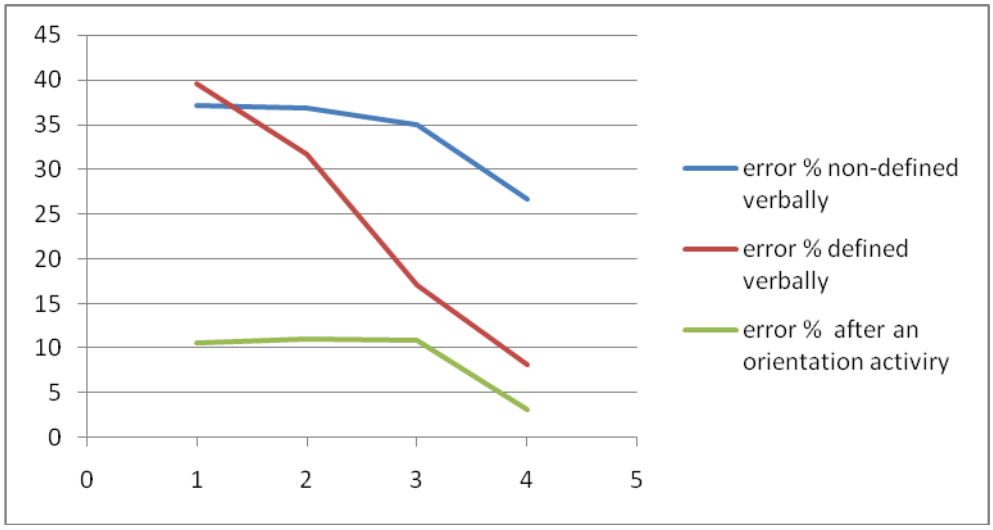
boxes, a green and a red one, the green one was empty and the red one contained a small cookie. She soon found out that the children had difficulties picking the box with the cookie when they were asked to do so. Even after the correct relationship box-cookie was established thanks to extensive practice, the day after the children had to be re-educated to establish the relationship box-cookie. The scenery changed dramatically when language was introduced in the experiment. The boxes were identified by the name of their colour. The empty box was addressed as *green* and the box with the cookie was identified as *red*. The identification process of the boxes was three times faster and lasted for several days and even weeks. But another most surprising phenomenon was observed. This connection was readily transferred to other objects like cups and cubes that the children succeeded in classifying in a similar way.

This experiment clearly shows how the introduction of the language in a learning situation generates some kind of re-organization of the mental processes thanks to the *naming* function of the word. But besides the naming function, the language accounts for the selection, analysis and screening of the external stimuli, classifying them, and when the occasion calls for it, it retrieves them allowing for the appropriate response or answer.

This conclusion was arrived at after observing children's reactions in another experiment conducted at the University of Moscow by Ruskaja (1961). She worked with groups of children with ages ranging from three to seven. They were asked to press a button with their left hand when a square shaped form appeared, and press another button with the right hand when a triangular shape appeared. After a sufficient number of correct answers, the scientist showed squares and triangles with different forms and sizes. Only the older children gave a high number of correct answers. This stage of the experiment was conducted without the use of language. In the next stage, the appearance of the geometrical figure was accompanied by its verbal label. It so happened, the scientist reports, that children within the three-four age range increased the number of errors; the children in the four-five age range registered a slight reduction of errors; the children in the five-six age range reduced their error rate to more than fifty per cent; and the children in the six-seven age range the error margin was insignificant. A final stage of this experiment was conducted where the children were allowed to familiarise themselves with the several geometrical forms by touching and looking at them, and counting their sides and angles.

The results were really surprising especially for the children in the three-four age range. At the beginning of the experiment the children in this age-range gave about forty per cent wrong answers; in the last stage of the experiment these children reduced the number of wrong answers to only ten per cent approximately. These numbers are represented in the diagram below.

Graph 1



Age range: 1 = 3-4 2 = 4-5 3 = 5-6 4 = 6-7

The graph shows to which extent the introduction of language influences the degree of learning in a given situation. It proves that language is responsible for the "generalization" of the actions of children and that it begins to develop at about 5 years of age and it goes through subsequent stages until it becomes stable at 7-8 years of age.

5.2.4. The Social and Cultural Context

The context within which the thinking structure of the child develops is his social and cultural milieu. Social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition where language is the vehicle through which social interaction occurs. This became the major theme of

Vygotsky's theoretical framework. He states (1978: 57) “Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals." Vygotsky's theory was an attempt to explain consciousness as the end product of socialization. For example, in the learning of language, our first utterances with peers or adults are for the purpose of communication but once mastered they become internalized and allow "inner speech". Interactions with surrounding culture and social agents, such as parents and more competent peers, contribute significantly to a child's intellectual development. Culture makes two sorts of contributions to a child's intellectual development. *First*, through culture children acquire much of the content of their thinking, that is, their knowledge. *Second*, the surrounding culture provides a child with the processes or means of their thinking, what Vygotskians call the tools of intellectual adaptation. In short, according to the social cognition learning model, culture teaches children both what to think and how to think.

5.2.5. Zone of Proximal Development

Another essential tenet in Vygotsky's theory is the notion of the existence of what he called the "zone of proximal development". Zone of proximal development is the difference between the child's capacity to solve problems on his own, and his capacity to solve them with assistance. In other words, the *actual developmental level* refers to all the functions and activities that a child can perform on his own, independently, without the help of anyone else. On the other hand, the *zone of proximal development* includes all the functions and activities that a child or a learner can perform only with the assistance of someone else. The person in this scaffolding process, providing non-intrusive intervention, could be an adult (parent, teacher, caretaker, language instructor) or another peer who has already mastered that particular function.

Vygostsky reached this conclusion after observing how a group of three-eight year olds employed themselves in a series of tasks designed for the purpose. At first, the task was fairly easy so that everyone could do it. But as it became more complex, the children reacted differently according to their age. The youngest ones asked the adults for help, the medium aged tried to execute the task the best they could, while the oldest fulfilled the task

overcoming every difficulty. During the process Vygotsky observed that among the medium and older children a new element emerged: the exteriorization of language. In other words, these children accompanied the execution of the task with spontaneous verbal instructions. He concluded that those instructions spontaneously generated by the same children actually served as guidelines to their own actions. Vygotsky mentions the case of a boy who broke his crayon while he was drawing and pronounced the word 'broken'. Immediately afterwards he drew a broken car. According to the scientist, spontaneous language increases as difficulties arise. This is so because the language embodies the function of adaptation and planning and might lead to a solution of the problem.

Vygotsky points out that the external verbal manifestation does not disappear with the child's growth. On the contrary, the language internalises steadily as the child grows up until it becomes verbal thought which is superior to the external language in terms of quality. Vygotsky's disciples at Moscow University demonstrated through electromiographic tests that the internal language is latent in the child's psyche. The internal language is the one which is more closely connected to the thinking process.

5.2.6. Vygotsky's implications in the classroom

Vygotsky's zone of proximal development has many implications for those in the educational milieu. One of them is the idea that human learning presupposes a specific social nature and is part of a process by which children grow into the intellectual life of those around them (Ibid., 1978). Since children learn much through interaction, curricula should be designed to emphasize interaction between learners and learning tasks.

Another implication is that instruction should be provided with the appropriate adult help, for children can often perform tasks that they are incapable of completing on their own. With this in mind, scaffolding - where the adult continually adjusts the level of his or her help in response to the child's level of performance - is an effective form of teaching. Scaffolding not only produces immediate results, but also instils the skills necessary for independent problem solving in the future.

According to Vygotsky (Ibid., 1978), an essential feature of learning is that it awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is in the action of interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his

peers. Therefore, when it comes to language learning, the authenticity of the environment and the affinity between its participants are essential elements to make the learner feel part of this environment. Unfortunately, these elements are not always predominant in conventional classrooms. When it comes to assess the learner's present level of development, assessment methods must target both the level of actual development and the level of potential development.

5.2.7. Conclusions

The social cognition learning model asserts that culture and society are the prime determinants of individual development. Humans are the only species to have created culture, and every human child develops in the context of a culture. Therefore, a child's learning development is affected in ways large and small by the culture - including the culture of family environment - in which he or she is enmeshed.

5.3. Piaget

5.3.1. Background

Jean Piaget (1896-1980) was a Swiss biologist and psychologist renowned for constructing a highly influential model of child development and learning. Piaget's theory is based on the idea that the developing child builds cognitive structures, that is, mental "maps," schemes, and networked concepts for understanding and responding to physical experiences within her environment. This scientist stresses the '*physical* interaction' aspect of the child with her surroundings for learning to occur. Piaget further attested that a child's cognitive structure increases in sophistication as she grows up, moving from a few innate reflexes such as crying and sucking to highly complex mental activities; in other words that children think and reason differently at different periods in their lives.

With that affirmation Piaget did not really say anything new, or that common sense would not suggest. However, he was able to isolate and describe the distinct and invariable stages that every normal child goes through during her cognitive development. He discovered that children experiment qualitative progress in their intellectual growth which he classified in four sequential stages.

The theorist called the first stage *sensory-motor*. This stage becomes operational at birth and is active until the age of 2. During this period the child's mental structures are mainly concerned with the mastery of concrete objects, learning their names, fixing the attention on their characteristics such as texture, colour, weight, etc. The second developmental stage, which goes from the age of 2 to 7, is called *pre-operational* and it is concerned with the mastery of symbols. Following, is the *concrete* stage when children learn mastery of classes, relations and numbers, and how to reason. This stage coincides with pre-adolescence which goes until 11-12 years of age. And finally, the last one, identified as the *formal operational* stage deals with abstract thinking; in other words people learn the mastery of thought. In each of these stages the child or adolescent achieves a major cognitive advancement which allows her to execute tasks that are more and more complex both in the physical and the mental spheres (Evans, 1973).

However, as I have anticipated in this introduction, a central component of Piaget's developmental theory of learning and thinking is that both involve the participation of the learner. That is, that for learning to occur the student has to be personally involved in the process. This view is also shared by Maria Montessori[13] as she writes:

> ...We discovered that education is not something which the teacher does, but that it is a natural process which develops spontaneously in the human being. It is not acquired by listening to words, but in virtue of experiences in which the child acts on his environment. The teacher's task is not to talk, but to prepare and arrange a series of motives for cultural activity in a special environment made for the child (1949).

[13] Maria Montessori, born in 1870, was the first woman in Italy to receive a medical degree. She worked in the fields of psychiatry, education and anthropology. She believed that each child is born with a unique potential to be revealed, rather than as a "blank slate" waiting to be written upon. Her main contributions to the work of those of us raising and educating children are in these areas: a) Preparing the most natural and life-supporting environments for the child; b) Observing the child living freely in this environment; c) continually adapting the environment in order that the chid may fulfil his or her greatest potential, physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

For Piaget knowledge is not merely transmitted verbally but must be constructed and reconstructed by the learner. For a child to learn and construct knowledge of the world, the child must act on objects, and it is this action which provides knowledge of these objects (Sigel, 1977); the mind organizes reality and acts upon it. Hence, the learner must be active; he is not a recipient to be filled with words and facts. Likewise Piaget advocates that the ability to learn any cognitive content is always related to their stage of intellectual development. Children who are at a certain stage cannot be taught the concept of a higher stage. Piaget's approach to learning is a readiness approach. Readiness approaches in developmental psychology emphasize that children cannot learn something until maturation gives them certain prerequisites (Brainerd, 1978).

This is so because intellectual growth involves three fundamental processes: assimilation, accommodation, and equilibration. Assimilation involves the incorporation of new events into pre-existing cognitive structures. Accommodation means existing structures change to accommodate to the new information. This dual process, assimilation-accommodation, enables the child to form schema. Equilibration involves the person striking a balance between oneself and the environment, between assimilation and accommodation. When a child experiences a new event, disequilibrium sets in until he is able to assimilate and accommodate the new information and thus attain equilibrium. There are many types of equilibrium between assimilation and accommodation that vary with the levels of development and the problems to be solved. For Piaget, equilibration is the major factor in explaining why some children advance more quickly in the development of logical intelligence than do others (Lavatelli, 1973: 40).

5.3.2 Piaget in the classroom

A Piagetian-inspired curricula emphasizes a learner-centred educational philosophy. The teaching methods which most American school children are familiar with - teacher lectures, demonstrations, audio-visual presentations, teaching machines, and programmed instruction - do not fit in with Piaget's ideas on the acquisition of knowledge. Piaget espoused *active* discovery learning environments in our schools. Intelligence grows through the twin processes of assimilation and accommodation; therefore, experiences should be planned to allow opportunities for assimilation and accommodation. Children need to explore, to manipulate, to experiment, to question, and to search out answers for themselves - activity is essential. However, this does not mean that children should be allowed to do whatever they want. So what is the role of the teacher? Teachers should be able to assess the child's present cognitive level; their strengths and

weaknesses. Instruction should be individualized as much as possible and children should have opportunities to communicate with one another, to argue and debate issues. He saw teachers as facilitators of knowledge - they are there to guide and stimulate the students. Allow children to make mistakes and learn from them. Learning is much more meaningful if the child is allowed to experiment on his own rather than listening to the teacher lecture. The teacher should present students with materials and situations and occasions that allow them to discover new learning. In his book *To Understand Is to Invent* Piaget said the basic principle of active methods can be expressed as follows:

> ...to understand is to discover, or reconstruct by re-discovery, and such conditions must be complied with if in the future individuals are to be formed who are capable of production and creativity and not simply repetition (1972: 20).

In active learning, the teacher must have confidence in the child's ability to learn on his own. Laboratories, workshops and technologies that encourage interactivity such as multimedia, hypermedia and virtual reality fit in with Piagetian thought. Computer software that is strictly drill and practice does not fit in with an active discovery environment. Drill and memorization practice, often used in language schools, do not encourage creativity or discovery.

5.3.3. Creative Use of the new technology

Students not only can use multimedia to learn, but they can also use it to communicate their understanding of the subject to those around them. They can create what they learn by using an authoring tool such as Hypercard.[14] Peer teaching is used as the students work together in the making of their projects. Students become active participants instead of passive sponges and the teacher truly takes on the role of facilitator as she gives them guidance in their creations. Hypermedia also allows the students to manipulate their environment as they follow the path(s) of their choice. Virtual reality has the potential to move education from its reliance on books to experiential learning in naturalistic settings. For example, rather than reading about an event, the children can participate in the event

[14] HyperCard is an application program created by Bill Atkinson for Apple Computer, Inc. that was among the first successful hypermedia systems before the World Wide Web. It combines database capabilities with a graphical, flexible, user-modifiable interface. (source: Wikipedia)

with simulated persons and/or objects. These technologies supply the students with a learning environment that encourages children to initiate and complete their own activities.

5.4. Krashen

5.4.1. Background

As a contemporary linguist, Stephen Krashen (Chicago, 1941) is known for his hypothesis on the Acquisition-Learning theory. He has earned a prominent position among other linguists thanks to his contribution as an educational researcher. He has published more than 350 between papers and books in the fields of second language acquisition (SLA), bilingual education, and reading. He is credited with introducing various influential concepts and terms in these areas such as Second Language Acquisition, the Input Hypothesis, Monitor Theory, the Affective Filter, and the Natural Order Hypothesis. I will give a brief description of these concepts.

5.4.2. The Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis.

According to Krashen second language performance operates on two independent systems: *the acquired system* and *the learned system*. The 'acquired system' or 'acquisition' is the product of a subconscious process very similar to the process children undergo when they acquire their first language. It requires meaningful interaction in the target language - natural communication - in which speakers are concentrated not in the form of their utterances, but in the communicative act. The 'learned system' or 'learning' is the product of formal instruction and it comprises a conscious process which results in conscious knowledge 'about' the language, for example knowledge of grammar rules. (Schütz, 2005)

According to Krashen 'learning' is less important than 'acquisition'. He points this out because ‘learning’ rarely occurs in a natural setting, as is the case with the acquisition process; therefore, the oral communicative skills never sip in in the subconscious substrate of the speaker. A proof of this is the innumerable graduates in arts degrees in English, which are classic examples of language learning. They often are trained and theoretically able to teach a language, but they can communicate in the learned language only with extreme difficulty. It is, therefore, necessary to reach a clear understanding of the differences between acquisition and learning to investigate their interrelationships as well as the implications for the teaching of languages.

First, we ought to consider that languages, in general, are complex, arbitrary, irregular phenomena, full of ambiguities, in constant random and uncontrollable evolution. Therefore, the grammatical structure of a language can be too complex and abstract to be categorized and defined by rules.

Even if some partial knowledge of the functioning of the language is reached, it is not easily transformed into communication skills. What happens in fact is a dependency predominantly opposite: to understand the functioning of a language as a system and to understand its irregularities is a function of familiarity with it. Rules and exceptions as well will make sense if we have already developed solid intuitive control of the language in its oral form, that is, when we have assimilated it. Krashen, however, admits that the knowledge obtained through formal study (language learning) can serve to monitor speaking.

The only instance in which the teaching of grammar can result in language acquisition (and proficiency) is when the students are interested in the subject and the target language is used as a medium of instruction. Very often, when this occurs, both teachers and students are convinced that the study of formal grammar is essential for second language acquisition, and the teacher is skillful enough to present explanations in the target language so that the students understand. In other words, the teacher talk meets the requirements for comprehensible input and perhaps with the students' participation the classroom becomes an environment suitable for acquisition. Also, the filter is low in regard to the language of explanation, as the students' conscious efforts are usually on the subject matter, on *what* is being talked about, and not the medium.

This is a subtle point. In effect, both teachers and students are deceiving themselves. They believe that it is the subject matter itself, the study of grammar, that is responsible for the students' progress, but in reality their progress is coming from the medium and not the message. Any subject matter that held their interest would do just as well.

5.4.3. The Monitor Hypothesis

The Monitor hypothesis explains the relationship between acquisition and learning and defines the influence of the latter on the former. The monitoring function is the practical result of the learned grammar. According to Krashen, the acquisition system is the

utterance initiator, while the learning system performs the role of the 'monitor' or the 'editor'. The 'monitor' acts in a planning, editing and correcting function when three specific conditions are met: that is, the second language learner has sufficient time at his/her disposal, he/she focuses on form or thinks about correctness, and he/she knows the rule.

It appears that the role of conscious learning is somewhat limited in second language performance. According to Krashen, the role of the monitor is - or should be - minor, being used only to correct deviations from 'normal' speech and to give speech a more 'polished' appearance. Krashen also suggests that there is individual variation among language learners with regard to 'monitor' use. He distinguishes those learners that use the 'monitor' all the time (over-users); those learners who have not learned or who prefer not to use their conscious knowledge (under-users); and those learners that use the 'monitor' appropriately (optimal users). An evaluation of the person's psychological profile can help to determine to what group they belong. Usually extroverts are under-users, while introverts and perfectionists are over-users. Lack of self-confidence is frequently related to the over-use of the ‘monitor’ function. (Schütz, 2005)

5.4.4. The Natural Order Hypothesis

The Natural Order hypothesis is based on research findings (Dulay and Burt, 1974; Fathman, 1975; Makino, 1980 cited in Krashen, 1987) which suggested that the acquisition of grammatical structures follows a 'natural order' which is predictable. For a given language, some grammatical structures tend to be acquired early while others late. This order seemed to be independent of the learners' age, L1 background, conditions of exposure, and although the agreement between individual acquirers was not always 100% in the studies, there were statistically significant similarities that reinforced the existence of a Natural Order of language acquisition. Krashen, however, points out that the implication of the natural order hypothesis is not that a language program syllabus should be based on the order found in the studies. In fact, he rejects grammatical sequencing when the goal is language acquisition. (Schütz, 2005)

5.4.5. The Input Hypothesis

The Input hypothesis is Krashen's attempt to explain how the learner acquires a second language. In other words, this hypothesis is Krashen's explanation of how second language acquisition takes place. So, the Input hypothesis is only concerned with 'acquisition', not 'learning'. According to this hypothesis, the learner improves and progresses along the 'natural order' when he/she receives second language 'input' that is one step beyond his/her current stage of linguistic competence. For example, if a learner is at a stage 'i', then acquisition takes place when he/she is exposed to 'Comprehensible Input' that belongs to level 'i + 1'. Since not all of the learners can be at the same level of linguistic competence at the same time, Krashen suggests that *natural communicative input* is the key to designing a syllabus, ensuring in this way that each learner will receive some 'i + 1' input that is appropriate for his/her current stage of linguistic competence. (Ibid., 2005)

5.4.6. The Affective Filter Hypothesis

Finally, the fifth hypothesis, the Affective Filter hypothesis, embodies Krashen's view that a number of 'affective variables' play a facilitative, but non-causal, role in second language acquisition. These variables include: motivation, self-confidence and anxiety. Krashen claims that learners with high motivation, self-confidence, a good self-image, and a low level of anxiety are better equipped for success in second language acquisition. Low motivation, low self-esteem, and debilitating anxiety can combine to 'raise' the affective filter and form a 'mental block' that prevents comprehensible input from being used for acquisition. In other words, when the filter is 'up' it impedes language acquisition. On the other hand, positive affect is necessary, but not sufficient on its own, for acquisition to take place (Ibid.: 2005). We have seen the importance this factor acquires in some of the methodologies that were discussed in the previous chapter. According to Oxford:

> Affect interacts closely with cognition at many learning stages, and this is particularly true in L2 learning, which is an adventure of the whole person rather than merely a cognitive exercise (2011: 61).

5.5. Parallelism between Vygotsky and Krashen

Although Vygotsky and Krashen come from entirely different backgrounds, the application of their theories to second language teaching produces similarities. Influence or

coincidence, Krashen's *input hypothesis* resembles Vygotsky's concept of *zone of proximal development*. Similarly, Krashen's *acquisition-learning hypothesis* also seems to have been influenced by Vygotsky. Although Vygotsky speaks of *internalization of language* while Krashen uses the term *language acquisition*, both are based on a common assumption: interaction with other people. Furthermore, the concept of acquisition defined by Krashen and its importance in achieving proficiency in foreign languages, can be a perfect application of Vygotsky's view of cognitive development as taking place in the matrix of the person's social history and being a result of it. Even the distinct concepts in Krashen's acquisition theory and Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory are not conflicting but complementary in providing resources for language teaching methodology.

By explaining human language development and cognitive development, Vygotsky's social-interactionist theory serves as a strong foundation for the modern trends in applied linguistics. It lends support to less structured and more natural, communicative and experiential approaches and points to the importance of early real-world human interaction in foreign language learning. This aspect is fully explored in chapter IV in the Communicative Approach section.

5.6. Other Learning Theories

Even though behaviourism had been the dominant tendency in general psychology and in educational psychology throughout various decades of the twentieth century, today cognitivism is considered the main approach in psychology. The slow shift from behaviourism to cognitivism occurred in the early part of this century. After years of almost exclusively behaviourist research, psychologists and educators became discontent with the limitations of behaviourism. This was motivated principally because behaviourism encouraged only observable and measurable research in the field of psychology and it disregarded mental events. The origin of cognitivism can be traced back to the early part of this century when the Gestalt psychologists of Germany, Edward Chase Tolman of the United States, and Jean Piaget had a tremendous influence on psychology and the shift from behaviourist theories. Cognitive psychologists generally agree that the birth of cognitive psychology should be listed as 1956. During this prolific year, a large number of researchers published influential books and articles on attention, memory, language,

concept formation, and problem solving. Some psychologists even specify a single *day* on which cognitive psychology was born. On September 11, 1956, many of the important researchers attended a symposium at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Enthusiasm for the cognitive approach grew rapidly, so that by about 1960, the methodology, approach and attitudes had changed substantially (Matlin, 1994). In the next pages I'll give a brief overview of other eminent cognitive psychologists that have influenced the field of education with their theories and findings.

5.6.1. Robert Gagné

Even though he was originally considered a behaviouristic researcher, Gagné based his work on cognitive insights. He was interested in observing the outcomes of a learning experience but before he needed to identify those conditions that place a learner in a position to learn. In his book, *The Conditions of Learning*, first published in 1965, Gagné describes the mental conditions that favour learning. These were based on the information processing model of the mental events that occur when adults are presented with various stimuli. In practical terms Gagne created a nine-step process called the *9 events of instruction*, which address the conditions of learning. According to this theory, the first thing a teacher should do is attract the learners' attention. This is the first basic condition without which no learning can take place. How does a teacher do that? He can write a word on the blackboard and ask learners what the word suggests, or show a slide, a picture or a sequence of images and ask what these mean to them, or volunteer some information or date about the subject that the teacher is going to deal with. The cognitive support behind this step is that giving background information creates validity. The use of multimedia (sounds, pictures, sequences) grabs the audience's attention. Asking questions in the beginning creates an interactive atmosphere.

The next step is to inform the learners about the objectives of the lesson. The rationale behind this step is to make learners aware of what to expect so that they are conscious and prepared to receive information. In addition, this step helps motivate the learner to complete the lesson. Generally, learning objectives are presented in the form of: "At the end of the lesson you will be able to…" and the teacher states the skill or data that the learner is supposed to acquire.

The third event is to stimulate recall of prior learning. This is of a big help for the learner because when learning something new, accessing prior knowledge is a major factor in the process of acquiring new information. It is easier for learners to encode and store information in long-term memory when there are links to personal experience and knowledge.

The fourth event is to present the information. The goal here is information acquisition. The content should be chunked and presented in a meaningful way, explained it and/or demonstrated. The fifth event is providing learner guidance. The teacher should facilitate hints and clues when needed, examples or examples that are not, analogies, case studies, graphical presentation and case studies. The sixth event is eliciting performance. Here learners are asked to produce what they have learned. This may mean to practice the new skill or behaviour, and at the same time helps to confirm the correct understanding of the new data. In addition, the repetition further increases the probability of retention.

The next event is giving feedback. As learners practice new behaviour it is valuable to provide specific and immediate feedback of their performance. The rationale behind this step is that feedback enhances learning. At this stage, if additional learning guidance is provided, this can make learning even more enhancing. The eighth event of learning is assessing performance. Before completing a formative cycle, learners should be given the opportunity, or be required to take a final assessment. Assessing learners' performance gives instructors a means of testing their learning outcomes. Once the instructor verifies that the material has been mastered or the skilled achieved, certification should be issued.

Finally the ninth event of instruction is enhancing retention and transfer to the job. Applying learning in real-life situations is a step forward mastery of learning. We have probably experienced personally that repetition of learned concepts is a tried and true means of aiding retentions, as is the case with writing spelling words many times to retail the correct spelling (Kruse, 2008).

Gagnè's nine events of instruction model has been used by many institutions in the last four decades. The outcomes have proven that it represents a sound instructional tool. This learning instructional design is certain to maximize the effectiveness of information

processing and results in real learning. The majority of English learning text books today follow Gagne's model especially in reference to the first four steps.

5.6.2. Carl Rogers

During the 80's the expression *learner-centred approach* began to appear in some English language books[15]. If we ask ourselves about the origin of the expression, we may have to resort to Carl Rogers. As an eminent psychologist of the twentieth century, he is best known as the founder of 'client-centred' or 'non-directive' therapy. His guiding principle, borne out of his own experience as practitioner, was that the 'client' (patient) usually knows how to proceed better than the therapist. He was a firm believer that all human beings have a natural propensity to learn. But besides psychology, Carl Rogers directed his professional interests to teaching. As a gifted teacher, Carl Rogers applied his guiding principle to the teaching field.

In his publication *Freedom to Learn* (1969) he explores in full the notion of *learner-centred teaching.* Besides the guiding principle, he hypothesised that "we cannot teach another person directly; we can only facilitate his learning." He also added, "The structure and organization of the self appears to become more rigid under threat; it relaxes its boundaries when completely free from threat..." He further explained, "The facilitation of significant learning rests upon certain attitudinal qualities that exist in the personal *relationship* between facilitator and learner" (in Smith, 1997).

More specifically, Carl Rogers suggests that the teacher needs: (i) to set a positive climate with his learners (a threat-free atmosphere); (ii) to clarify the purpose of the learners; (iii) to organize and make available the learning resources; (iv) to balance intellectual and emotional components of learning; and (v) to share feelings and thoughts with learners without dominating. (Ibid., 1997)

According to the scientist this is accomplished, first, when the learner participates completely in the learning process and has control over its nature and direction; then, when the learning is primarily based upon direct confrontation with practical, social, personal or research problems; and finally, when self-evaluation is the principal method of assessing

[15] *BBC English*, by Judy Garton-Sprenger and Simon Greenall, 1987

progress and success. We can detect in what Rogers describes as the best conditions for learning, a nearness of vision with Piaget's approach.

Rogers criticised the general approaches existing in most Western schools because their methods go right against the natural propensity to learning that was mentioned above. He distinguished between cognitive (meaningless) learning and experiential (significant) learning. The former corresponds to academic knowledge such as learning vocabulary or multiplication tables and the latter refers to applied knowledge such as learning about engines in order to repair a car. The key to the distinction is that experiential learning addresses the needs and wants of the learner. To Rogers, experiential learning is equivalent to personal change and growth. This becomes possible because in the experiential learning there is personal involvement, it is self-initiated, it is evaluated by the same learner, and it has pervasive effects on themselves. (Smith, 1997, 2004)

5.6.3. Bruner's Constructivist Theory

This theory is called constructivist because, according to Bruner, learning is an active process in which learners *construct* new ideas or concepts based upon their current and past knowledge. Meaning and organization of the new experiences are given by the cognitive structures (e.i. schema, mental frames, learning styles, etc.) which allow learners to go beyond the information given. Since it depends on cognitive structures, this theory is based upon the study of cognition. Much of this theory is linked to child development research, especially to Piaget's findings. Following his suggestions, Bruner states that any theory of instructions should take into account four major aspects. The first is that learners should be predisposed towards learning. The second is that the body of knowledge should be structured in such a way that it can be most readily grasped by the learners. The third aspect deals with the sequence with which the material is presented. And the last aspect addresses the nature and pacing of rewards and punishments. Moreover, he adds, good methods for structuring knowledge should result in simplifying the material, generating new propositions and increasing the manipulation of information. When it comes to teaching, the instructor should try and encourage students to discover principles by themselves (inductive method). The instructor and learners should engage in active and meaningful discussions. It is also the instructor's responsibility to present the information in a format appropriate to the learners' current state of understanding, taking into account the learners' age,

level of proficiency and learning styles. Curriculum should be organized in a spiral manner so that the student continually builds upon what they have already learned (Patsula, 1999).

5.6.4. Bandura's Social Learning Theory

The social learning theory of Bandura emphasizes the importance of observing and modelling the behaviours, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others. Bandura states:

> Learning would be exceedingly laborious, not to mention hazardous, if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do. Fortunately, most human behaviour is learned observationally through modelling: from observing others one forms an idea of how new behaviours are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action (1977: 22).

In the beginning Albert Bandura was considered a behaviorist. In fact, his studies and experiments were conceived and planned to demonstrate how the environment influenced people's behavior. But soon he admitted that even though it is true that environment causes behaviour, it is also true that behaviour causes environment. He called this concept *reciprocal determinism.* The person's surroundings and the person cause each other. Later, he introduced a new element: the person's psychological processes. So, he began to look at personality as an interaction among these three factors: the environment, behavior and the person's psychological processes. These processes are considered important because they are responsible for the retention and retrieval of language and images in people's minds.

The moment Bandura introduces mental processes in his theory cannot be regarded as a behaviorist any longer; he is, in fact, considered one of the "fathers" of the cognitivist movement. Since Bandura is specializing in observational learning and self-regulation, the introduction of imagery and language allows him to theorize more effectively on these aspects of people's personality.

5.6.4.1. Observational learning, or modelling

Bandura is famous for his studies on *the bobo doll*. He filmed scenes of a woman who hit and punched a bobo doll in a room, while shouting violent words like "sockeroo!!" He then showed the film to a number of kindergartners who watched the women's behaviour with great interest. Afterwards, the kids were let out to play in the room with the bobo doll. The children imitated the women's behaviour and even surpassed it at some point.

Bandura did a large number of variations on the study. The model was rewarded or punished in a variety of ways, the kids were rewarded for their imitations, the model was changed to be less attractive or less prestigious, and so on. Responding to criticism that bobo dolls were supposed to be hit, he even did a film of the young woman beating up a live clown. When the children went into the other room, they found the live clown. They proceeded to punch him, kick him, hit him with little hammers, and so on. He called the phenomenon *observational learning* or *modelling*.

All these variations allowed Bandura to establish that there were certain steps involved in the modelling process. He identified four components underlying observational learning: Attention, Retention, Reproduction and Motivation. Bandura's social learning theory is based on the following principles:

- The highest level of observational learning is achieved by first organizing and rehearsing the modelled behaviour symbolically and then enacting it overtly. Coding modelled behaviour into words, labels or images results in better retention than simply observing.
- Individuals are more likely to adopt a modelled behaviour if it results in outcomes they value.
- Individuals are more likely to adopt a modelled behaviour if the model is similar to the observer and has admired status and the behaviour has functional value.

Bandura's work is very much related to the theory of Vygotsky which emphasizes the central role of social learning (Patsula, 1999).

5.6.5. Conversation Theory (Gordon Pask)

The fundamental idea of the theory was that learning occurs through conversations about a subject matter which serve to make knowledge explicit. Conversations can be conducted at a number of different levels: natural language (general discussion), object languages (for discussing the subject matter), and metalanguages (for talking about learning/language).

In order to facilitate learning, Pask argued that subject matter should be represented in the form of entailment structures which show what is to be learned. Entailment structures exist in a variety of different levels depending upon the extent of relationships displayed (e.g., super/subordinate concepts, analogies).

The critical method of learning according to conversation theory is "teachback" in which one person teaches another what they have learned. Pask identified two different types of learning strategies: serialists who progress through an entailment structure in a sequential fashion and holists who look for higher order relations. Conversation theory applies to the learning of any subject matter. Pask synthesises his theory in three principles:

1. To learn a subject matter, students must learn the relationships among the concepts.

2. Explicit explanation or manipulation of the subject matter facilitates understanding (e.g., use of teach back technique).

3. Individual's differ in their preferred manner of learning relationships (serialists vs holists).

This teach back is of prime importance to auditory type learners because thanks to this technique they can not only come to grasp the subject matter in depth, but will be able to establish association among related concepts. The teach-back technique is employed in the medical field to get the patients to follow doctors' prescriptions.

5.6.6. Gestalt Theory

Max Wertheimer was one of the principal proponents of Gestalt theory which emphasized higher-order cognitive processes in the midst of behaviourism. The focus of Gestalt theory was the idea of "grouping", i.e., characteristics of stimuli cause us to structure or interpret a visual field or problem in a certain way (Wertheimer, 1922; in Green, 1997). The primary factors that determine grouping were: (1) proximity - elements tend to be grouped together according to their nearness, (2) similarity - items similar in some respect tend to be grouped together, (3) closure - items are grouped together if they tend to complete some entity, and (4) simplicity - items will be organized into simple figures according to symmetry, regularity, and smoothness. These factors were called the laws of organization and were explained in the context of perception and problem-solving.

Wertheimer was especially concerned with problem-solving. Werthiemer provides a Gestalt interpretation of problem-solving episodes of famous scientists (e.g., Galileo, Einstein) as well as children presented with mathematical problems. The essence of successful problem-

solving behaviour according to Wertheimer is being able to see the overall structure of the problem. Gestalt theory applies to all aspects of human learning, although it applies most directly to perception and problem-solving. It can be summarised in the following principles:

1. The learner should be encouraged to discover the underlying nature of a topic or problem (i.e., the relationship among the elements).
2. Gaps, incongruities, or disturbances are an important stimulus for learning.
3. Instruction should be based upon the laws of organization: proximity, closure, similarity and simplicity.

The application of the principles of the Gestalt theory finds an extensive use in the teaching and learning of foreign languages. Activities such as grouping words of the same grammar categories, or related semantic fields are commonly resorted to in ordinary classroom work. Similarly, a lot of exercise that have to do with fill-in the gaps or cloze activities are traced straight back to the Gestalt theory.

5.6.7. Ausubel's Subsumption Theory

David Ausebel (1918-2008) served as a professor of educational psychology at the University of Toronto, then, he chaired the doctoral programme in educational psychology at the City University of New York. During his entire carrier he has been a very influential figure in the field of educational psychology. The following quotes intend to anticipate the underlying principles of Ausubel's learning theory:

> If I had to reduce all of educational psychology to just one principle, I would say this: The most important single factor influencing learning is what the learner already knows. Ascertain this and teach … accordingly (1978).

An advance organizer is a cognitive strategy proposed by Ausubel in his Subsumption Theory, which allows the learner to recall and transfer prior knowledge to the new information being presented. This theory is based on the idea that learning is facilitated, if the learner can find meaning in the new information. If a connection can be made between the new information and previous knowledge, the learning experience will become more meaningful to the learner. Therefore, the new information will be learned. The advance

organizer is not a strategy used by the learner, but rather an instructional strategy used by the teacher. In essence, the advance organizer is a brief, general speech prepared by the teacher, before presenting the new material, to introduce the new lesson. In designing the advance organizer recall of previous knowledge relevant to the new knowledge is important. It should provide a bridge that links the known to the unknown, by including an abstract outline of the new information and a restatement of old knowledge. Theoretically, this will encourage transfer and application of old knowledge, to make the new knowledge more meaningful to the learner. In SLA advance organizers could be used to help the learner categorize new learning, in relation to their native language. The learner could then distinguish similarities and differences in the target language and their native language, thus carrying out a cognitive comparison between deviant and correct target language, forms or utterances. This may even reduce learners' errors as conscious attention is focused on these differences and similarities. The use of advance organizers does fit in with current teaching approaches, particularly with the communicative language approach. For in this approach, learners negotiate for meaning and the teacher acts as a facilitator of the communication process. Ausubel emphasises that advance organizers are different from overviews and summaries which simply emphasise key ideas and are presented at the same level of abstraction and generality as the rest of the material. Organizers act as a subsuming bridge between new learning material and existing related ideas. Ausubel's theory has commonalities with Gestalt theories and those that involve schema (e.g., Bartlett) as a central principle. There are also similarities with Bruner's "spiral learning" model, although Ausubel emphasises that subsumption involves reorganization of existing cognitive structures not the development of new structures as constructivist theories suggest. Ausubel was apparently influenced by the work of Piaget on cognitive development. Ausubel clearly indicates that his theory applies only to reception (expository) learning in school settings. He distinguishes reception learning from rote and discovery learning; the former because it doesn't involve subsumption (i.e., meaningful materials) and the latter because the learner must discover information through problem solving.

Ausebel’s basic learning principles can be summarised as follows:

1. The most general ideas of a subject should be presented first and then progressively differentiated in terms of detail and specificity.

2. Instructional materials should attempt to integrate new material with previously presented information through comparisons and cross-referencing of new and old ideas.

3. Instructors should incorporate advance organizers when teaching a new concept.

4. Instructors should use a number of examples and focus on both similarities and differences.

5. Classroom application of Ausubel's theory should discourage rote learning of materials that can be learned more meaningfully.

6. The most important single factor influencing learning is what the learner already knows (Recker, 2011).

Ausubel emphasises that his theory is applicable only to expository style classroom setting. Rote and discovery learning do not fit with the subsumption theory where the emphasis is on relating the new information to the existing cognitive structure on a non-verbatim basis. The approach advocated by Ausubel is a deductive one and it is advised for teaching children as well.

5.7. Conclusions

I have reviewed the basic principles of some of the most eminent cognitive psychologist that have influenced the educational field as it appears today. We can see that even though each one of them presents his theories according to his convictions, we notice that many principles overlap. For example Vygotsky's principal of the Zone of Proximal Development might have influenced Ausebel's Subsumption theory when he says: "The most important single factor influencing learning is what the learner already knows. Ascertain this and teach … accordingly." Another example is Gordon Pask's teach-back theory which leads straight into Vygosky's principal that learning occurs within a social-cultural context. In conclusion, it was interesting to see how these theories compare and contrast with each other and how they served as the building blocks of the

multiple methodologies in the teaching of foreign languages in particular and the application and contribution that they have provided in the educational arena in general.

PART 2: EMPIRICAL STUDIES

FOREWORD

CHAPTER VII: STUDY II

Chapter VI: Study 1

6.1. Presentation

This study, as well as the second study, is meant to investigate to what extent the use of appropriate learning strategies (strategies that match the learner's learning style and task) enhances learners' performance in foreign language learning. As I have anticipated in the introduction, the study sets out to confirm whether the use of those strategies that match the learner's learning style, actually brings about a significant progress in the learners' performance in a foreign language. The hypothesis of this piece of research can, therefore, be formulated as follows: given the appropriate learning strategies, learners' performance in foreign language learning should be significantly better compared to that of other learners who do not employ suitable strategies.

In order to test this hypothesis, only two learning style channels have been chosen: the auditory and the visual-verbal. The reason for this choice is a purely practical one, as the majority of students under observation have exhibited these two learning channels.

Because of a number of variables illustrated in the next section that would have made results unreliable, it was not possible to set up the study establishing an experimental group and a control group. Yet, it will be possible to compare the results of a group of students who definitely used suitable learning strategies, with the results obtained by other students who showed little or no interest in using appropriate strategies. What follows is a description of the two groups taking part in the study, and the tools used to measure their level of proficiency in English.

6.2. Participants

The participants in the study include two separate groups, with a total of twenty students. The first group was composed of only boys (twelve), between fourteen and seventeen years of age, while the second group (eight) were mainly girls (six) within practically the same age range. They all attended a course designed to prepare them to sit the Cambridge First Certificate in English Examination. Not all students sat the exam in June 2003; some needed additional six-month training. Students met twice a week with an average of two and a half class-hours per week. The course was part of extra-curricular activities and started fifteen minutes after regular course time ended, i.e. at 5:15, after the students had been at school for seven and half-hours. This schedule, together with other factors such as illnesses and a concentration on school exams during particular periods of the academic year, kept some students away from regular attendance to the course. Nevertheless, on average, students attended about seventy-five per cent of the course time. Students' average language level was intermediate all across the four basic language skills, although some students performed better than others from the outset of the course. It is worth mentioning that they were not familiar with the terms learning styles, learning strategies or learner autonomy, although a few of them might have used some learning strategies with a slight degree of awareness.

The majority of these students lived in an upper-middle class area of Madrid (Mirasierra). They all attended a private and selected school located in the same high-income

residential area. The school itself emphasised foreign language learning to the point that it allocated more class time to foreign languages (especially English), than to the students' mother tongue or to mathematics. On average, public schools assigned three hours per week, whereas this particular school allocated six hours per week to the study of the English language. In this way the school satisfied the parents' demand for a solid bilingual education, especially at primary level. These students' parents considered foreign language learning a distinctive and significative element in their children's education, and - therefore - fostered and promoted foreign language training. This is the reason why some of these students had been sent to study abroad in an English speaking country for a term or two, even at such an early age as eleven or twelve. But besides the experience of studying and living abroad, which applied only to a few cases, all the participants had received private tutoring or at least extra curricular training in the foreign language.

Along with the external stimuli to foreign language proficiency, these students appeared to be self-motivated as well. They were willing and systematic learners. Generally speaking, they were endowed with an intellectual capacity above the average student. Such capacity was obvious from their grades as they were usually ''A" students. They could manage to keep up with the school's demanding standards, and simultaneously find time for extra curricular activities such as sports or foreign language training.

The tools used to measure the proficiency levels of learners were the practice tests recommended by the University of Cambridge Local Examination Syndicate (UCLES). The entire series of listening and reading tests were taken from the Richmond First Certificate Course Practice Tests book (Fried-Booth, 1997). As regards these tests the following should be stressed:

- They belong to a series of tests, and as such they are ordered on a gradient scale of difficulty: the first test being easier than the second and so on.
- The first reading and listening tests were especially easy; as a matter of fact, almost everyone scored high in both tests.

- These two tests were given as language assessment, and their results are found in the 'initial score' column of table four (pg. 63). Even if these two marks did not say much about the proficiency level of the participants, they indicated that their general oral and reading comprehension levels were adequate for the examination they were preparing to sit.
- Finally, these first marks can provide clues as to participants' strengths and weaknesses in the two skills under observation.

As far as the First Certificate in English examination is concerned, it has five parts: the reading paper, the writing paper, the use of English paper, the listening paper and the speaking paper. As mentioned above, since only the visual-verbal and the auditory learning styles were taken into account, only the reading and the listening papers (visual-verbal and auditory channels) will be considered. These tests are designed to admit only one correct answer; this allows for accurate marking of the language proficiency level at the beginning, during, and at the end of the study, and, therefore, guarantees an objective score calculation. As far as the other three papers (writing, speaking and use of English) are concerned, their marks were not recorded.

The First Certificate in English examination tests were chosen mainly because their degree of difficulty is compatible with the average language proficiency level of the learners participating in this study. Secondly, because these tests show a fixed pattern and maintain throughout a linguistic uniformity in vocabulary, structures, functions and contexts. Since only a few tests were used, the uniformity trait acquired great importance, as it was essential to neutralise potential variables that might have altered the reliability of the results. Furthermore, these tests offered the advantage of dealing with current events and issues, and the material was authentic as it was derived from sources such as newspapers, magazines, literature, etc. On top of that, their adaptation to test format was carried out with linguistic rigour and the degree of difficulty was kept on a gradient scale throughout.

6.3. Methodology

In order to get a clear picture of how the study was set up, it is useful to present its development in five consecutive stages: (i) the language level assessment stage; (ii) the learning styles determination stage; (iii) the learning strategies discovery stage; (iv) the learning styles-learning strategies analysis stage; (v) and the test performance stage.

i. To begin with, it was necessary to measure how students performed in the reading and listening tests at the outset of the study. To achieve this, the Richmond First Certificate Tests book was used, where students were tested on the first reading and listening tests provided by this book. The results are shown in table 4 (pg. 63).

ii. Once the initial level of the participants had been assessed, they answered a Learning Style Questionnaire to find out their learning styles. The LSQ chosen explored 4 basic learning channels: the visual, the auditory, the kinaesthetic and the tactile. More details about this questionnaire are given in the following section (see appendix 3).

iii. In the next stage, all the participants were proposed learning strategies related principally to the auditory, visual-verbal and tactile/kinaesthetic learning styles and their use was encouraged (see appendices 1a, 1b, and 1c for more details). About two weeks later another list of strategies was given to each student (see appendix 2). Such a list, taken from Rubin (1981), included, among others, clarification/verification strategies, monitoring and memorisation strategies, strategies related to inductive/deductive reasoning, social and practice strategies. The purpose of this list was twofold. Firstly, after the introduction of the concept of learning strategies, students had a chance to familiarise themselves with some strategies (those mentioned in appendixes 1a, 1b and 1c); then, with this more comprehensive list, students were made aware that the use of learning strategies embraced all the aspects of learning. Secondly, it was useful to know whether students were using learning strategies at all, and if they did what kind of strategies these were. For this purpose, after an initial period of familiarisation of about two weeks, during which period students were asked to use the list and check those items they were employing while studying English or preparing for tests, they were asked to hand in the list. This was useful not only to identify each individual's tendency in reference to her/his strategic choices, but also to predict

future performance in relation to the reading and listening papers of the FCE Examination.

iv. At this stage, the combination of learning strategies adopted by the students was analysed against their learning styles. Such an analysis served a double purpose. First, it helped unveil students' tendencies in their choice of learning strategies, and therefore contributed to knowing students better. Second, studying the types of students' strategies and matching them against their learning styles was very helpful in predicting students' results in the two FCE Examination papers chosen. Due to the importance of this step, a whole section has been devoted to the treatment of these issues, which find their full development in section 5 on page 51.

v. In the last stage, the test results are discussed. Even though the FCE Examination is articulated in five papers, only those scores that have a direct relation with the visual-verbal and auditory style preferences were taken into consideration. This means that only the reading and the listening test scores were recorded. The marking of these scores occurred from March to June 2003, the period during which the study was programmed to take place. During these three months, a total of three readings and five listening tests were given. These test scores will permit to confirm or reject predictions that are made by analysing the learning strategies adopted by each student as already stated above.

What follows is a detailed account of all the steps taken to carry out the study in question. This section also contains the results of the Learning Styles Questionnaires.

6.4. Procedure

The study began by recording the initial scores of the reading and listening tests, which can be found in the *Initial Scores* columns of table 4 (see pg.161). This marking took place in mid-March 2004. About a week later, a Learning Style Questionnaire was given to all

students (see table 4, pg. 151). This LSQ, in reality, consisted of three questionnaires (Appendix 3).

The first one included twenty-four statements about learning preferences where the different senses were involved. On the right side of each statement there were three options: 'Often', 'Sometimes' and 'Seldom'. Students chose only one of these for each answer. The three options were assigned three, two and one points, respectively. Once the students' answers had been obtained, the statements that dealt with one sensory perception were grouped together and the total was summed up. The group with the highest score represented the student's preferred sensory learning channel. The second questionnaire included twenty incomplete sentences and three possible endings for each sentence. The three possible ways of ending each sentence were organised in three columns according to sensory perception preferences. The students chose one ending for each incomplete statement. The column with more choices represented the student's favourite sensory learning channel. The third questionnaire was similar to the first one in that the students read fifteen statements which were then rated with one, two or three according to the frequency with which students performed those actions described in the statements. The statements and their ratings were then grouped together according to the same sensory perception. The group with the highest score indicated the student's learning preference.

The first two questionnaires were developed by Barsch (1999)[16], and were designed to assess the visual, auditory and tactile/kinaesthetic channels. They were meant to be used with the help of a tutor. The third one was proposed by Coderre (2000) and was addressed to the learner. Even though the three questionnaires were designed to assess the same learning channels, that are the visual, the auditory and the tactile/kinetic, the wording, the presentation and the format of each one of them differed.

[16] The three questionnaires and information about their authors are available at the following site: http://www.nald.ca/CLR/csa/appx_d.htm

The decision of adopting three different tests was motivated by the convenience of cross-checking students' answers for accuracy. The aim was to check whether the results obtained through one questionnaire were consistent with the results obtained through the other two. As a matter of fact, it can be observed from the table below that in most cases students scored uniformly across the three questionnaires. This means that if a student exhibited a visual learning preference in one questionnaire, she showed the same learning preference in the other questionnaires as well. In a few cases (see students eight and fifteen, Table 2), however, the questionnaire scores showed some discordance. Notwithstanding this low incidence of discordance, the results of these tests can, generally, be considered reliable.

The next few lines are intended to give a brief explanation of the content of Table 2 which summarises the results of this first step in the investigation. The first column lists the student's number. This is used every time we want to refer to the student's performance or learning style and strategies. The second column represents the student's name initials and the third column the three sensory channels. The channel in bold letters indicates the student's dominant style. The letters 'Qu.' stand for 'questionnaire' and the numbers 1, 2 and 3 for the three questionnaires given. The numbers in bold characters mean the highest score obtained in each questionnaire. The last column sums up the scores obtained in each test and shows the total, offering a global view of the results.

If these are observed, it can be noticed that eleven out of the twenty participants have visual learning preferences. This observation supports Dale's theory according to which most learners receive information from visual stimuli. Another interesting observation is the number of students who appear to be auditory oriented. Eight out of twenty, which represent 40% of the total, scored high on this style. This outcome is in line with Reid's (1987) findings, which inform us that learners in the Hispanic culture are often auditory.

Table 4

LEARNERS' LEARNING STYLES						
Stud. №	Stud. Initials	Learning Style Channels	Qu.1	Qu.2	Qu.3	Total points
1	J V C	**visual**	**32**	**8**	**13**	**53**
		auditory	18	6	9	33
		k/t	18	6	9	33

2	A A R	**visual**	**30**	**9**	**10**	**49**
		auditory	30	3	13	46
		k/t	20	8	10	38
3	I A R	visual	18	4	10	32
		auditory	**32**	**8**	**12**	**52**
		k/t	18	8	8	34
4	J G M	**visual**	**34**	**10**	**12**	**56**
		auditory	19	5	11	35
		k/t	17	4	11	32
5	F S V	**visual**	**23**	**6**	**12**	**41**
		auditory	22	4	10	36
		k/t	18	10	8	36
6	J M S	visual	26	5	12	45
		auditory	**28**	**7**	**12**	**47**
		k/t	12	8	8	28
7	J G B	**visual**	**18**	**7**	**12**	**37**
		auditory	**20**	**6**	**11**	**37**
		k/t	22	7	6	35
8	E D C	visual	22	8	11	41
		auditory	24	7	13	44
		k/t	**32**	**5**	**12**	**49**
9	A L R	visual	20	3	11	34
		auditory	**22**	**8**	**11**	**41**
		k/t	18	9	9	36
10	F H F	**visual**	**32**	**11**	**15**	**58**
		auditory	16	6	9	31
		k/t	22	3	11	36
11	M C R	visual	21	6	10	37
		auditory	**32**	**8**	**15**	**55**
		k/t	26	6	8	40

12	J M R A	visual	21	6	12	39
		auditory	**32**	**6**	**12**	**50**
		k/t	26	8	8	42
13	S P C	**visual**	**30**	**8**	**12**	**50**
		auditory	26	5	11	42
		k/t	**30**	**7**	**10**	**49**
14	P I P	**visual**	**33**	**10**	**14**	**57**
		auditory	28	6	12	46
		k/t	16	4	11	31
15	P R B	visual	30	6	8	44
		auditory	**24**	**9**	**15**	**48**
		k/t	18	4	9	31
16	L C S	**visual**	**30**	**10**	**12**	**52**
		auditory	26	7	13	46
		k/t	16	3	8	27
17	C G M	visual	30	4	13	47
		auditory	26	4	11	41
		k/t	**38**	**12**	**14**	**64**
18	R L M	visual	30	4	12	46
		auditory	**29**	**11**	**13**	**53**
		k/t	16	5	11	32
19	P C T	**visual**	**32**	**4**	**10**	**46**
		auditory	26	7	10	43
		k/t	**24**	**9**	**13**	**46**
20	M R I	**visual**	**34**	**7**	**13**	**54**
		auditory	24	7	12	43
		k/t	26	6	11	43

Once the questionnaires were scanned through and the preferred learning styles were identified, a note (see appendices 1a, 1b, 1c) was handed to each student informing her about the resulting learning style. Besides the preferred learning channel, the note included a number of learning strategies suggested for use throughout the rest of the course. Talking about students' learning styles constituted the ideal circumstance to introduce the concept of learning strategies as well. After a brief description and definition of learning strategies, students were asked to give examples of some strategies they were already using and some brainstorming was practised with the purpose of identifying other suitable strategies. Two weeks later a copy of the strategy list taken from Rubin (1981; see appendix 2) was given to each learner. The purpose of giving them the list was to make students aware of the existence of a large number of strategies, and, at the same time, to encourage their use.

After this brief training session, for the ensuing three months students exercised with practice tests (see Table 6). Students practised one listening and one reading paper per month, except in June 2004 when two listening papers were given, but the reading paper was skipped because the allocated class time was not sufficient to conduct a full test.

As we can see from the scores in Table 4 some results are missing. This is due to the fact that some students did not attend class on the testing day, in spite of the fact that they were notified on time that testing was taking place. If we observe the table, we notice that the number of missing scores for the reading paper is superior to the number of missing scores for the listening paper. This is explained by the fact that some students did not complete the test within the allocated class time. These students were allowed to take the tests home; unfortunately many of them never returned the tests to the teacher. During the same period of time, brief, informal conversations were conducted in the school corridor or in the classroom during breaks in relation to the type and frequency of learning strategies students were using. Some students responded well and were enthusiastic about using some strategies, while others did not show any particular interest. These strategies, together with the ones students checked off from the learning strategy list, have been collected in a table (Table 5, pgs. 150-159). This table also shows each student's number, her/his learning

style and the corresponding strategies. In the next section, the attention will be directed to the learning style-learning strategies relationship for each learner. This relationship is precisely the bulk of the content discussed in the upcoming section.

6.5. Styles and strategies

As the title of this section suggests, the theme addressed at this stage points straight to the core of the main issue of the study in question. For this reason the section acquires special importance and therefore requires a detailed and minute description of the information handled here. It might be useful, at this point, to remind one of the aims of this piece of research. This dissertation claims that it is not sufficient to use a greater number of learning strategies, it is also necessary to select those strategies that best suit the learner's preferred ways of learning in order to enhance learner's performance in a foreign language. By this is meant choosing not only those strategies that fit with the learner's dominant learning mode, but to additionally stretch beyond her comfort learning zone and look for and employ other strategies that are compatible with her second and even third preferred learning style. In this section, the emphasis is placed on analysing the strategy choices of learners in relation to their learning styles in order to evaluate precisely the suitability of the strategies employed. Table 5[17] in the following pages sets forth the choice of learning strategies made by the participants in this study. Even though the participants might have used other strategies besides the ones collected in Table 3, these strategies can be considered the most representative since they cropped up either during the conversation, the brainstorming activity or/and the written assessment. From this analysis it will be possible to make predictions in reference to how learners progress through the series of tests.

[17] Since Table 5 is of considerable length, it has been divided in sections (5a, 5b, 5c, etc.). The comments and predictions that refer to the specific participants (1, 2, 3, etc.) will go on the same page where that part of the table appears, except for student 2 whose comments - for a question of space - appear on the next page.

⇒ Student 1. According to Table 5a the dominant style of this student is visual. We can see that this student uses a fairly large selection of strategies. He makes use of clarification strategies, but he is also keen on monitoring strategies. Furthermore, he balances the use of strategies that have to do with deductive and inductive reasoning. But what is important to point out is that this student uses a good number of strategies (the ones in italics) that suit his learning style. Another observation worth mentioning is that a reasonable number of oral strategies can be detected as well. From this observation I am inclined to induce that this student's scores should be high not only in the reading tests, but in oral tasks such as listening and speaking, despite the fact that the average scoring level in the assessment of his learning preferences is low, as suggested by the table.

Table 5a

Students' Learning Styles and Strategies

Student	Learning style	Learning strategies[18]
1	Visual: 53 (aud.: 33; k/t: 33)	Repeats part of words or sentence, ask for the rest; puts words in sentence to check understanding: asks for translation; *looks up words in dictionary or structure in grammar book*; asks if rule fits a particular case; restates in own words or briefer

[18] The *italics* indicate that the strategies are compatible with the dominant learning style.

		terms; corrects error in own/other's pronunciation, vocabulary, spelling, grammar; *observes and analyses language use of others to see how message was interpreted by addressee*; notes source of own error; *takes notes of new items*; compares native to target language; recognises patterns of own pronunciation; *makes summaries*; *watches movies*, listens to English sounds; *always highlights with colour markers*; talks loud; hears own voice; memorises; is careful to pronunciation; practices forms of grammar on own initiative; *watches and remembers*; guesses the meaning from the following clues: other items in a sentence, key words in a sentence, context of discourse, topic of discourse.
2	Visual: 49 (aud.: 46; k/t: 38)	*Always makes use of computer word processing*; *uses highlighter pens to emphasise key points*; *learns information presented in diagram form*; *writes out sentences and phrases that summarise key information; looks up words in dictionary*; asks for meaning of items; asks if rule fits a particular case; corrects error in own pronunciation, vocabulary, spelling, grammar; notes source of own error or language interference; *takes notes of new items*; distinguishes relevant from irrelevant clues in deducing meaning; infers vocabulary by analogy; compares native to target language; finds meaning of words by breaking it down into parts; repeats sentences until produced easily; talks to self in target language; consciously applies grammatical rules when speaking; makes use of new words when speaking; when corrected practices correct form.

⇒ Student 2. This student's preferred learning channel is also visual. From the table it can be observed that quite a few of his learning strategies employ the visual sense and are therefore suitable to his learning style. He also makes use of deductive-inductive reasoning strategies, and he employs strategies such as repeating sentences aloud or making use of new words when speaking that help in the execution of oral tasks. If we had to label these strategies, we would call them practice or mnemonic strategies. From these observations it can be inferred that this student will do well in the reading tests and the listening/speaking tests too.

⇒ Student 3. According to the learning style questionnaire, this student's predominant style is auditory. However, if we look at the kinds of learning

strategies used, we notice that very few of them align with his style. Besides, his strategic repertoire is very limited. In this case, only a poor performance can be predicted in the listening as well as other tests.

⇒ Student 4. This student exhibits a visual learning style. However, despite the fairly generous selection of learning strategies used, very few of them fit his learning style. It seems, on the contrary, that he favours those strategies that are in line with oral tasks such as listening. Only average scores in the reading tests can be foreseen for this student, but he might do better in the listening tests instead, as he uses a wider choice of oral strategies.

Table 5b

Student	Learning style	Learning Strategies
3	Auditory: 52 (vis.: 32; k/t: 34)	Uses pictures to guess meaning*; listens for key words in a sentence*; uses verification/clarification strategies; *listens for essential info related to context*; memorises basic sentences; writes words out; puts into context to clarify meaning*; repeats sentences to further understanding;* uses synonyms; asks to be corrected.
4	Visual: 56 (aud.: 35; k/t: 32)	Asks for repetition; asks for meaning of item/sentence; asks for difference between two words or sentences; restates in own words or briefer terms; corrects error in own/others' pronunciation; *takes notes of new items; guesses the meaning from the following clues: key words in sentences, pictures*; notes exceptions to rules; talks to self in target language; creates opportunities with natives in order to practice; answers to self questions to other students; listens to radio, *watches TV and attends movies*; memorises words in context; memorises basic sentences; listens for key words; *writes word out*.

⇒ Student 5. This student's learning style appears to be visual. Nonetheless, among his choice of strategies a good number of memorisation, practice and

repetition strategies can be found. Other strategies listed seem to suggest a kinaesthetic style learner or even an auditory style learner rather than a visual type learner. From the above, poor scores in the reading and listening tests can be expected.

⇒ Student 6. This student exhibits an auditory learning style. A good number of learning strategies adopted by this student match his dominant learning style. Along with this concordance, it is possible to find a reasonable amount of learning strategies that suit the visual channel, which is the next preferred learning mode exhibited by this student. In this case, good scores are foreseeable in both the reading and listening tests.

Table 5c

Student	Learning style	Learning strategies
5	Visual: 41 (aud.: 36; k/t: 36)	Uses clarification/verification strategies; balances inductive-deductive reasoning strategies; uses gestures, intonation, own native language to guess meaning; listens for key words; knows and uses basic key words/phrases to get necessary information; uses context to understand the essentials; memorises basic sentences; practices with self; uses laughter as cue to mistakes; gets help from natives; memorises words in context: asks for repetition; uses simple sentences; *writes words out*.
6	Auditory: 47 (vis.: 45; k/t: 29)	Uses verification/clarification strategies; keeps written record of words that belong to different grammar categories; induces grammar rules from examples; questions grammar rules; *listens to English sounds and music and attends films*; *asks to be corrected*; notes down the corrections; checks rules in grammar book and meaning and spelling in dictionary; *corrects errors in own pronunciation*, spelling grammar and style; notes source of own error; *pronounces out loud*; uses key words in a sentence; guesses meaning from syntactic structures, pictures and *intonation; repeats sentences until produced easily; talks to self in target language; makes use of new words when speaking; listens carefully to what it is said and how it is said; initiates conversation with teacher and fellow students*; *travels to target language countries*; uses gestures to communicate meaning; speaks more slowly or more rapidly; keeps an interest in the target language culture; *practices sounds* and

		grammar rules with self.

⇒ Student 7. This student's preferred learning style is a blend of the three sensory channels: the visual, the auditory and the kinaesthetic/tactile. In reference to his choice of learning strategies the stress is on practice and memorisation strategies. Some clarification/verification strategies are also present along with inductive-deductive strategies. From this picture, it is difficult to say whether this student will do well or poorly because, while some of the strategies match his learning preferences, too few of them are being employed.

⇒ Student 8. Although the predominant learning mode of this student is kinaesthetic, the total points awarded to him in the other two sensory channels are very close; therefore, in this case too it is difficult to predict testing outcomes. This difficulty arises mainly from the fact that there is no clear tendency of the strategic choices, as, even if apparently lots of learning strategies have been used, very few of them match the learning styles exhibited by this student.

⇒ Student 9. No strategic feedback from this student was gathered.

Table 5d

Student	Learning style	Learning strategies
7	Visual: 37; auditory: 37 (k/t: 35)	Asks for translation from native to target language, asks for repetition; asks for meaning of items/sentence; *induces meaning from key words in sentence, pictures and gestures*;

		infers grammatical rules; infers vocabulary by analogy; finds meaning of item/word by breaking it down into parts; makes use of new words when speaking; repeats sentences util produced easily; makes up sentences; practices with self; memorises basic sentences*; listens for key words*; recognises limitation of dictionary; creates opportunity for practice; uses synonym to communicate meaning; *writes word out*; speaks slowly.
8	K/t: 49 (vis.: 41; aud.: 44)	Repeats words to confirm understanding; asks for translation from native to SL and vice versa: asks for difference between two words or sentences; *observes and analyses language use of others to see how message was interpreted; finds some sort of association (semantic, visual, auditory, kinetic*); deduces meaning from part of word, own native language, intonation, *gestures*, pictures, key words in a sentence; makes use of new words when speaking; repeats sentences until produced easily; repeats sentences to further understanding; uses simple sentences*; spells out words to make meaning clear*; writes words out; *spells words out to make meaning clear.*
9	Auditory: 41 (k/t: 36; vis.: 34)	No feedback.

⇒ Student 10. This student's preferred learning mode seems to be visual as he scored 58 points in the visual style category against 31 and 36 points in the auditory and kinaesthetic styles respectively. Among the many learning strategies employed by this student, a good number of strategies are suitable to his preferred learning style, as can be inferred from the table. In contrast, notwithstanding the low score registered in the auditory learning style (31 compared to 58 for the visual style), it can still be observed that a high number of strategies employed are useful to develop oral skills. Such an apparent contradiction can lead one to think that this particular student is devoting valuable strategic time and energy to an area where he is unlikely to obtain worthwhile results. At a closer look, however, one will conclude that it is not so. One has to consider that if a good language learner, besides using those

strategies that fit his dominant learning style in a natural way, makes an effort to look for and deploy those strategies that he does not feel naturally inclined to use, but that he knows are necessary to compensate for a natural weakness in a certain area, then, he is likely to achieve fruitful outcomes. Such may be the case with this student, especially since he adopted a large number of auditory strategies notwithstanding his visual preferences. As will be confirmed by the scores table when the results are examined, this student's performance ranked well above the mean in both the reading and listening tests.

Table 5e

Student	Learning style	Learning strategies
10	Visual: 58 (k/t: 36, aud.: 31)	*Takes notes of new items*; *writes out items to be learned several times*; pronounces out loud; recognises limitation of dictionary; *uses pictures to guess meaning;* uses specific context to learn language; listens for key words; listens for essential info related to context; uses context to understand the essential; memorises basic sentences; practices with self; uses laughter as cue to mistakes; memorises words in context; catches some words; asks for repetition and clarification; *writes words out;* spells words out to make meaning clear; uses simple sentences; puts into context to clarify meaning; directs conversations to where he has sufficient strength; uses cognates; uses synonyms to communicate meaning; initiates conversation with fellow students/teacher/native speakers; answers to self questions addressed to other students; *listens to TV*, radio *and attends movies*; uses inductive inferencing to guess meaning in the following situations: *key words in a sentence, pictures,* context of discourse, gestures, intonation and part of a word; *correlates words with actions*; *observes and analysis language use of others to see how message was interpreted by addressee*; *finds some sort of association: semantic, visual,* auditory and *kinetic*.

⇒ Student 11. This student's learning style is clearly auditory. It is just as easy to spot learning strategies that suit the auditory learning style. As a matter of fact, a great majority of learning strategies employed by this student are auditory

oriented. In this case it is predictable that he will do well at least in the listening test.

⇒ Student 12. This student's learning preferences are similar to those of his above-mentioned peer, with the only reservation that his predominant style is not as pronounced as that of the previous learner is. Furthermore, this learner's selection of learning strategies is quite similar to the other learner's. It is easy to locate quite a good selection of learning strategies suitable to his dominant learning mode. Even the number of strategies used by the two learners is comparable. So, good results in the listening tests are expected for this learner too.

⇒ Student 13. No learning strategies feedback from this student was gathered.

Table 5f

Student	Learning style	Learning strategies
11	Auditory: 55 (k/t: 40; vis.: 37)	Asks for examples of how to use a particular word/expression; asks for correct form to use; asks for translation; asks for meaning of item; looks up words in dictionary; *asks if given utterance is correct; asks to be corrected; corrects errors in own pronunciation,* vocabulary, spelling, grammar; *pronounces/reads out loud with good memory*; *finds semantic, visual, auditory, kinetic association*; writes sentences with new words; *to learn a sequence of steps, writes them out in sequence form and reads them out loud*; *listens to English radio, TV and music; experiments with new sounds; practices intonation*.
12	Auditory: 50 (k/t: 42; vis.: 39)	Uses clarification strategies: asks for examples*; repeats words to confirm understanding*; asks for translation from native to SL; *corrects errors in own pronunciation*; takes notes of new items; gathers meaning from pictures, topic of discourse, gestures, narrative conversational sequence; ignores difficult words: tries to get an overall picture; *pronounces out loud*; compares native to target language; *experiments with new sounds in isolation and in context; repeats sentences until produced easily;* makes use of new words when speaking;

		listens carefully to what it is said and how it is said.
13	Visual: 50 (k/t: 49; aud.: 42)	No feedback.

⇒ Student 14. The learning mode of this student seems to be visual. Yet, he has employed strategies that are more likely to be used by an auditory style learner. This should not necessarily suppose a drawback since these strategies may help him progress in the oral tasks. But the problem arises if he really is a visual style learner; in that case, poor test results in the reading paper is expected because he has not used any strategies suitable to his dominant style of learning. But again, the use of oral type strategies may enhance his listening skills.

⇒ Student 15. This student's learning style is auditory. According to the table this student uses a good selection of auditory oriented learning strategies. Even visual-verbal learning strategies are being used in an adequate amount, which is appropriate since her next preferred learning channel is visual. Positive testing outcomes are predictable with this student in both the listening and the reading tests.

Table 5g

Student	Learning style	Learning strategies
14	Visual: 57 (k/t: 31; aud.: 46)	Corrects error in own pronunciation; notes source of own error; pronounces out loud; consciously applies grammatical rules when speaking; when corrected, practices correct form; compares native to target language; groups words according to similarity of endings; speaks more rapidly; *writes out words*; memorises words in context; memorises basic sentences, listens for key words.
15	Auditory: 48 (vis.: 44; k/t: 33)	Uses clarification/verification strategies; c*atches some words*; asks for further clarification*; repeats sentences to further understanding*; *corrects error in own pronunciation*; observes and analyses language use of others; takes notes of new items; *pronounces out loud*; *asks for repetition*; memorises words in context; uses laughter as cue to mistakes; uses co-occurrences rules; uses context to understand the essentials; *listens for key words*; questions co-occurrence rules; uses circumlocution to get meaning across; *repeats sentences until produced easily*; consciously applies grammatical rules when speaking; makes use of new words when speaking; *listens carefully to what it is said and how it is said: accent, intonation, tone and stress, and register;* answers to self questions to other students; spends extra time in language lab; uses synonyms to communicate meaning; puts into context to clarify meaning; uses simple sentences; *spells words out to make meaning clear.*

⇒ Student 16. The visual learning style stands out for this student. Among her selection of learning strategies, she counts on a reasonable number of learning strategies that match her learning style. She also seems to favour social

strategies among other choices of oral strategies, which are quite representative, but she is not keen on deductive or inductive strategies. So, it can be said that she will probably do well in both the reading and the listening tests.

⇒ Student 17. This student's dominant style is clearly kinaesthetic/tactile. She obtained the highest points for a particular style (k/t) among all those who answered the questionnaire. The general impression one gets when analysing this student's use of learning strategies is that she adopts a wide range of strategies. Some match her main learning style, others are suitable for an oral oriented individual, while others are

more suitable for visual type learners. Besides, she seems to be inclined towards social strategies and some practice strategies, but seems to leave aside deductive strategies. According to the analysis above she may do well in any paper, but especially in the reading tests.

Table 5h

Student	Learning style	Learning strategies
16	Visual: 52 (aud.: 46; k/t: 27)	*Uses pictures to guess meaning*; sees relation between meaning and intonation; listens for key words; knows and uses basic words/phrases to get info; *makes up sentences*; uses sentences with native speakers; asks for information and clarification; creates opportunities to practice with natives, fellow students and teacher; ignores difficult words; initiates conversation with fellow students/teacher; listens to radio, *watches TV and attends movies*; develops and revises grasp of target language on a continuing basis; talks to self in target language; listens carefully to what and how it is said; *corrects error in* own pronunciation*, vocabulary, spelling, grammar*; *takes notes of new items*.
17	K/t: 64 (vis.: 47; aud.: 41)	Uses clarification/verification strategies; corrects errors in own pronunciation, vocabulary, spelling and grammar; observes and analyses language use of others to see how message was interpreted; *finds association (semantic, visual, auditory, kinetic); uses gestures*, pictures and key words in a sentence; finds meaning of items/word by breaking it down into parts; repeats sentences until produced easily; listens carefully to what is said and how it is said*; tries to imitate pronunciation*

		and other aspects: initiates conversation with other students; listens to radio and TV, and attends movies; *uses gestures to communicate meaning*; spells words loud to communicate meaning; *speaks more slowly or more rapidly*; uses context to understand the essentials; uses pictures to guess meaning; uses circumlocution to get meaning across; paraphrases a sentence to check understanding; asks to be corrected; gets native speakers to help her.

⇒ Student 18. Even though this student's learning style is auditory, his choice of strategies does not suggest that he is an auditory learner. As a matter of fact, to define this type of learner is difficult; firstly, because the range of strategies used is limited, and secondly, his strategic selection does not show a clear tendency. For this reason, it is difficult to infer that this student will do well.

⇒ Student 19. This student shares her learning preferences between the visual and the kinaesthetic styles. The majority of the learning strategies used by this student match with either one or the other style. It is also interesting to note her preference for inductive reasoning strategies. Some strategies address her third option of learning preferences which is only three points away from the other two. To sum up, since the range of strategies used is harmoniously balanced with the varied learning preferences, it can be deduced that it is highly probably this student will perform well, at least in the reading tests.

Table 5i

Student	Learning style	Learning strategies
18	Auditory: 53 (vis.: 46; k/t: 36)	Speaks more slowly; uses simple sentences; uses gestures to communicate meaning; repeats sentences to further understanding: *listens to TV/radio*; initiates conversation with fellow students/teacher; creates opportunities with natives to practice; makes use of new words when speaking; infers grammatical rules by analogy; uses clarification and monitoring strategies; uses memorisation strategies; some inductive

		strategies; takes notes of new items; finds some sort of association either semantic, visual, etc.
19	Visual: 46 - k/t: 46 (aud.: 43)	Uses clarification/verification strategies*; observes and analyses language use of others to see how message was interpreted by addressee*; *finds some sort of semantic, visual, auditory and kinetic association; uses mechanical devises, for ex: puts new words in right pocket and moves them to the left when learned*; *uses clues from pictures, gestures, key words, syntactic structures to guess meaning*; ignores difficult words: tries to get an overall picture; finds meaning of item/word by breaking it down into parts; listens carefully to what it is said and how it is said*; uses gestures to communicate meaning*; uses simple sentences; *speaks slowly*; *uses pictures to guess meaning; recognises idiomatic/stylistic characteristics.*

⇒ Student 20. This student's favourite way of learning is through the visual sense. Unfortunately, only three of the many strategies deployed by this student are directly related to her dominant learning mode. It is true that quite a few strategies are practice strategies and some are memorisation strategies, which can help in any task, but this student concentrates on oral strategies, whereas her learning preferences are visual. She might have difficulties in the reading tests but she could do better in the listening tests.

Table 5j

Student	Learning style	Learning strategies
20	Visual: 54 (aud.: 43; k/t: 43)	Correlates words with actions; distinguishes relevant from irrelevant clues in deducing meaning; infers grammatical rules and vocabulary by analogy; notes exceptions to rules and

		questions rules for this; repeats sentences until produced easily; consciously applies grammatical rules when speaking, makes use of new words when speaking; listens carefully to what it is said and how it is said; listens to TV/radio; uses gestures to communicate meaning; *writes out words*; practices with self; memorises basic sentences; listens for key words; *uses pictures to guess meaning*; uses clarification strategies; memorises words in context; listens for essential info, related to context; *takes notes of new items*; pronounces out loud.

Collecting the participants' learning strategies and arranging them in a table together with the learners' learning styles were key to the realisation of this brief analysis. The table serves further as an attempt to match suitable learning strategies to given learning styles. The matching guidelines follow suggestions given by Felder whose brief extract is reported in section 4.2. (pg. 36). As can be noticed, Felder proposes concrete learning strategies that he recommends for a given learning style. Such proposals come from other sources as well[19]. Some of the learning strategies associated with a given learning style coincide with learning strategies that Felder and the other source I mentioned propose for the same learning style, while other strategies, even though they are different, seem to employ the same sensory perception.

An exhaustive study that relates learning strategies or groups of strategies to specific learning styles is unknown at this stage, but what seems to be common are studies whose concern is to show how matching teaching styles to learning styles enhances academic achievements (Dunn and Dunn, 1978; Griggs, 1991; Griggs and Dunn, 1996). In many of such cases, besides the strategic approach devised by the instructor, learners are encouraged to resort to concrete learning strategies that they use for themselves once their personal style of learning is known (Nunan, 1996: 36-38).

6.6. Results

[19] Catherine Jester (2000), a Learning Disability Specialist, developed a table where she associates specific learning strategies with a given learning style. This reference is called: DVC online Introduction to the DVC Learning Style Survey for College, and can be found at the following site: http://www.metamath.com/Isweb/dvclearn.html

This section has been articulated in a series of steps. The first step consists in arranging the participants' scores in a table (Table 6), so that one can, at a first glance, have a global view of the learners' performance, whenever possible, depending on the availability of the results. The next step consists in calculating the 'mean' of each test (Table 7) and obtaining the deviation value for each participant and each task. These figures appear in Table 8. The third step consists in selecting eight participants and examining their results. The choice of participants was carried out according to criteria that are explained later in this section. The rest of the participants, on the other hand, have also been grouped together according to common characteristics, and their results have also been analysed and discussed. And finally, some arguments have been put forward that aim at commenting on those participants who registered progress, as other arguments aim at commenting on those participants with timid or no progress.

Table 6

Scores Table

Dates	**March-Initial scores**	**April**	**May**	**June**	**June**	**March-Initial scores**	**April**	**May**
Tasks	*Listen1*	*Listen2*	*Listen3*	*Listen4*	*Listen5*	*Read1*	*Read2*	*Read3*
Max.Score *Stud Num.*	*../30*	*.../30*	*.../30*	*.../30*	*.../30*	*../35*	*.../35*	*../35*
1	27	24	24	23		28		
2	26	19	18	21	21	28		
3	21	16	18	16	15	19		
4	21	15	13	17				
5	20	16	15	16		19		
6	28	27	16	21	23	28	30	27
7	22	15	16	14	22	28		
8	25	17	13	15	17	12		20
9	25	25		20	28			
10	29	24	26	21	26	28	30	28
11	26	26	19	18	26	21	21	
12	26	19	18	21	26	28	25	26
13	24	24	22	19	18	28	28	21
14	25	20		16		27	19	
15	27	19	15	17		14		
16	27	21	17	19		23	27	29
17	24	24	21	22		24	28	27
18	23	13	13					

19	28	20	25	23		29	19	29
20	23	17	24	7		20		

As was explained at the end of section 4, Table 6 does not supply all the scores obtained from the marking. This circumstance impedes the adoption of a standard statistical approach for every participant. By this is meant an approach based fundamentally on gathering students' scores and arriving at conclusions exclusively by observing whether performance in the execution of the tasks has improved significantly over the testing period. Even if it is unreliable to practice an analysis based solely on numerical terms in some cases, the few scores available can provide clues as to students' progress. Other indicators such as dedication, which means the full participation of the course time (shown by the completed score marks in Table 6), and principally an analysis based on the strategic choices practised by the participants will permit to reach conclusions. Nonetheless, we can also count on the qualification grades appearing in the 'Statement of Results' notes issued by the University *of* Cambridge, ESOL Examinations for those learners who sat the examination at the end of the preparation course. In those cases where the table is complete, the reliance on numerical terms can be more thorough.

Going back to the results, it is useful to point out, first of all, that it will not be sufficient to simply look at the participants' scores and decide whether there has been significative progress or not. In order to make each participants' score more reliable it will be necessary to find the 'mean' of all the scores for that particular test, and then compare the learners' score (whenever possible) against that mean (Table 8).

The action of calculating the 'mean' and obtaining the deviation values from this 'mean' is taken to homogenise results. In other words, even though the practice tests are arranged on a gradient scale of difficulty, it can happen that some tests are more difficult than others for certain participants, or that the tests' contents are less familiar to a certain number of participants. The 'mean' cuts across peculiarities of this nature, avoids extreme values and brings these values closer. Moreover, evaluating a learner's progress only on the basis of the numerical score of the tests, without taking into

consideration the scores of the other learners, would only offer a partial view of this learner's progress. The 'mean' establishes relationships among learners' scores and provides a reference point. For these reasons it represents a more reliable way to measure any progress or lack of it shown by the participants.

Table 7

The 'mean'

Tasks	Listen. 1	Listen. 2	Listen. 3	Listen. 4	Listen. 5	Read. 1	Read. 2	Read. 3
Nº of scores	20	20	18	19	10	17	9	8
Total	497	401	333	346	222	404	227	207
Mean	25	20	19	18	22	24	25	26

Secondly, those participants' scores that are available have been processed to obtain the deviation values[20] for each test. Once calculated, these values have been aligned (see Table 8) so as to establish whether there has been progress or not, at least for those participants that have supplied the scores. This will give some evidence of the improvement shown by them as far as the execution of the reading and listening tasks is concerned, during the experimental period. Once the improvement rates are made available, they can be compared. The results of these comparisons will permit us to draw some conclusions.

Table 8

Deviation Values

Tasks	Listen. 1	Listen. 2	Listen. 3	Listen. 4	Listen. 5	Read. 1	Read. 2	Read. 3
Stud. Nº	Deviation	Deviation	Deviation	Deviation	Deviation	Deviation	Deviation	Deviation
1	2	4	5	5		4		

[20] By deviation value is meant the difference between the 'mean' value and that particular score. This expression is not to be confused with 'the standard deviation'.

2	1	-1	-2	3	-1	4		
3	-4	-4	-2	-2	-7	-5		
4	-4	-5	-7	-1				
5	-5	-4	-5	-2		-5		
6	3	7	-3	3	1	4	5	1
7	-3	-5	-4	-4	0	4		
8	0	-3	-7	-3	-5	-12		-6
9	0	5		2	6			
10	4	4	7	3	4	4	5	2
11	1	6	0	0	4	-3	-4	
12	1	-1	-1	3	4	4	0	0
13	-1	4	3	1	-4	4	3	-5
14	0	0		-2		3	-6	
15	2	-1	-4	-1		-10		
16	2	1	-2	1		-1	2	3
17	-1	4	2	4		0	3	1
18	-2	-7	-6					
19	3	0	6	5		5	-6	3
20	-2	-3	5	-11		-4		

Step three is intended to explore the outcomes obtained by a selected number of participants. Such selection has fallen on students one, two, six, ten, eleven, twelve, sixteen, seventeen and nineteen. The underlying principles for these choices can be summarised as follows:

- These participants selected and employed learning strategies that matched their learning style preferences.

- These participants' deviations registered values above the mean. This finding is important since it indicates that the performance of these participants outstrips that of other participants.
- The number of strategies used by these participants, with few exceptions, was superior to the rest of the participants.
- The deviation values of these participants recorded upward trends in at least one task.

From the table above the improvement achieved by student one in the listening tasks is rather noticeable. Even if the LSQ did not show high auditory points for this student, he employed quite a few oral learning strategies and because of this I predicted that he could do well in this task. The reading tests of this student provide only the initial score. However, as he sat the exam in June, I am able to cite the Statement of Results which places the reading paper outcome in the Exceptional-Good band[21]. This position on the scale should correspond to about 80% of correct answers (twenty-eight in absolute terms), which implies an improvement.[22] As a consequence, it can be stated that the results obtained by this student met the expectations, and the predictions were correct.

Student two, as student one, only provides the initial score of the reading tests. Fortunately, this student also sat the FCE examination in June, so it is possible to report that his position in the reading paper is found in the Good-Borderline band. This means that he obtained around 70% of correct answers, which implies that even though we cannot speak about a clear improvement, at least we can say that there was no regression. As far as the listening scores are concerned, this student's Statement of Results reports that his position is in the “Good-Borderline” band. This grade changes the negative tendency appearing in table 5 and converts it to a positive tendency, since this qualification corresponds to at least 68% of correct answers. Even for this student, therefore, predictions were right.

[21] Cambridge ESOL marks the 5 papers according to 5 bands: 1. Exceptional; 2. Exceptional-Good; 3. Good-Borderline; 4. Borderline-Weak; 5. Weak. The approximate ranges of percentages of correct answers for each qualification are as follows: weak, 54% and below; weak-borderline band, 55%-59%; borderline-good band, 60%-74%; good-exceptional band, 75%-79%; exceptional, 80% and above.

[22] Incidentally, this student obtained the FCE diploma and passed the examination with a B grade. In all the papers he scored ‘Good’ and’ Exceptional’, except in the writing paper where he was placed on the 'Borderline' band.

Looking at the scores of student six for the listening tests, we can see that his tendency has remained more or less neutral throughout the experimental period. For this student, his dominant learning style was reported to be auditory with a punctuation of forty-seven. However, his next preferred style is visual with forty-five points; the closeness of these two values practically assigns this learner two favourite learning styles. Consequently, the reading test scores should also be considered. At first sight, these values (the deviations being four, five, and one) do not indicate much progress, especially in the last measurement. Nonetheless, as this student sat the FCE Examination in June, I am able to include the position obtained in the reading paper on the mark scale, which is found to be very close to the 'Exceptional' band, meaning that the correct answers in the last reading test reach almost 90%. This percentage in the reading paper is equivalent to thirty-one correct answers over a maximum of thirty-five. Considering that twenty-one (corresponding to 60%) is the average pass mark, we get a deviation value of ten. If this value is added to the previous values, a new series of values is obtained, which is: four, five, one and ten. The inclusion of this last deviation value changes the tendency upward dramatically, making it a very positive tendency. With these results, it can be said that even in this case the predictions were met.

The next student's scores to be examined are those of student ten. This student's overall performance can be considered among the most outstanding. The first element to consider is the energy and time devoted by this student to this undertaking, as can be inferred from the table above: all his boxes register a score. This means that he attended the course regularly. The second element to consider is his high degree of effectiveness. Since the beginning of the course his deviation values are way above the 'mean' in both the reading and listening tests. The listening tests register the following deviation values: four, four, seven, three, four to which should be added the 'Good-Borderline' position on the qualification scale to be found in the Statement of Results of the FCE Examination. The same can be maintained with the reading scores with deviation values that register four, five, two and the examination position which is found on the “Good” line which means 75% (twenty-six over thirty-five in absolute terms; twenty-one being “Borderline” which means a deviation value of five) of correct

answers. In reference to this student it can be said that he performed well in that area (reading) where he showed greater inclination, but he also obtained very good results in that area (listening) for which he did not feel a natural inclination, but which he compensated for with determination and effort.

The listening scores of student eleven are worth examining because this student did not perform particularly well in other skills such as writing, reading, speaking or did not seem to be profoundly acquainted with grammar rules, yet he showed remarkable skills in the listening tests. It is interesting to note that from the LSQ this student clearly manifested an auditory learning style with a score of fifty-five points in contrast to the other two sensory channels where the points were forty and thirty-seven. Besides, it is necessary to observe that, generally speaking, this student had not made use of a large number of learning strategies. But what really deserves to be pointed out is the concentration of oral strategies deployed by this student as almost all of them were speaking and listening learning strategies. So, it is not surprising to find that his scores in the listening tests stand out, even in comparison with the listening test scores of students with a higher second language proficiency level. In conclusion, if we consider that the first assessment in the listening test resulted in a deviation value of 1 and the subsequent values registered were six, zero, zero and four, this student's improvement can only be confirmed.

Student twelve shows moderate progress in the listening tests, especially in the last two tests, as demonstrated by the scores. The reading tests, however, show a decline. This student sat for the Cambridge examination, but he did not obtain very good results. He only scored on the “Borderline-Weak” band in the listening test, and in the “Weak” band in the reading test, as reported by the Statement of Results. Although he did not make use of a substantial number of strategies if we compare them with other participants, the ones he used were straight to the point. In other words, he used six strategies associated with the auditory sensory channel, and he exhibited an auditory learning style preference. Other strategies he used were related to the visual sense. Predictions for this student were that he could do well in the listening task, so these predictions were met only in part.

A brief look at the scores of student sixteen reveals that it is not possible to speak of progress in the listening tests as her deviation values indicate a descending trend. However, improvement is evident in the reading tests as she improved from minus one (-1) in the assessment test to two and three in the subsequent tests. After all, she exhibited a visual-verbal learning style and some of her strategic choices are in line with her preferred learning mode. Nonetheless, it was predicted that she could do well in the listening tests as well since her next sensory channel was auditory and also because she mainly concentrated on oral strategies, but this did not happen. In conclusion, the predictions were met only in the reading task.

Notwithstanding the peculiarity of the preferred learning channel manifested by student seventeen (she showed a kinaesthetic learning mode with a punctuation of sixty-four), compared to that of other students, her test scores are worth examining because of the fairly wide range of learning strategies which she used. It should be pointed out that while a good number of strategies fit well with her learning style, she additionally employed a noticeable set of learning strategies that aid in the execution of reading and listening tasks. In fact, if we look at table six, we observe that the deviation values in the listening tests start from minus one (-1) jump to four, then go back to two and up again to four. A similar behaviour can be found with the deviation values of the reading tests. The assessment value is zero, and the subsequent values move up to three and one. But as this student sat the FCE Examination, the Statement of Results supplies an additional value. In the reading paper she obtained a grade registered in the “Good-Borderline” band. This grade requires about 70% of accuracy which, in absolute terms, may mean that over a total of thirty-five answers, twenty-five were right. Considering that the average pass mark is twenty/twenty-one, the resulting deviation value amounts to four or even five. With this new value the series acquires an upward trend resulting in: zero, three, one and four/five. The prediction made for this student anticipated good performance on both papers, so even in this case expectations were met.

The next student whose scores have been examined is student nineteen. This student exhibited two learning style preferences: the visual and the kinaesthetic in equal measure. The auditory sensory channel, however, is not too distant from the other two

as only three points separate it from them. The interesting observation about this student is that even though the number of strategies employed is not significantly high, they do represent a harmonious blend of strategies appropriately linked to the kinaesthetic, visual and sensory learning styles.

On examining the test scores of this student, on the one hand, it is difficult to appreciate a progressive trend in the reading test scores at first sight, as the score values are in a descending order of five, minus six (-6) and three. However, as she sat for the FCE examination, I am able to cite her mark in the reading paper supplied by the Statement of Results, which is found in the “Good” band of the marking scale. In numerical terms, this grade indicates 75% of correct answers. This percentage is equivalent to twenty-six correct answers (in absolute terms) in the reading paper. If we consider that the maximum score in this paper is thirty-five, and that the average pass number of correct answers is twenty/twenty-one, we can count on a deviation value of five/six, which added to the series of value of five, minus six (-6), and three, inverts the tendency upwards and makes it a positive tendency. On the other hand, it is easy to observe a progressive trend in reference to the listening test scores, as it is shown by the deviation values on page 64. In fact, the rate of improvement is higher in the listening test scores than in the reading test scores. These results confirm the predictions advanced in section five for this participant.

Without losing sight of the main claim of this dissertation, the essential and fundamental trait that needed to be present was that the participants used a sufficient number of learning strategies associated with his/her dominant learning style. It so happened that these participants, with a few exceptions, also used a greater number of learning strategies compared to the rest. Another characteristic common to this group was that their deviation values were all above the 'mean'. These characteristics taken together have generated another one: the set of deviation values of these participants showed an upward trend in at least one area of the two under examination.

On the other hand, it is interesting to observe that the rest of the participants, and in a special way participants three, four, five, seven, eight, fourteen, fifteen, eighteen and

twenty, share common traits which show the other side of the same coin, and which can be summarised in the following points:

- With the exception of participant fifteen, the rest of this group used fewer strategies than the first group of participants. Furthermore, very few of these strategies matched the participants' preferred learning mode.
- Their performance in the tests shows a level well below the mean.
- Their deviation values (table 8) present downward trends.

By looking at Table 6, we can deduce that the majority of these participants have devoted time and effort to the execution of the tasks as demonstrated by the scores recorded in their boxes. This statement is made to refer especially to students six, ten, eleven, twelve, sixteen, seventeen and nineteen. It is also interesting to note that except for student sixteen, the rest of the first group sat the FCE Examination and six of them passed it, (students eleven and twelve obtained a grade D). As far as the second group is concerned, of the nine participants only two sat the FCE Examination, but none of them reached a passing mark. Participant four obtained a grade 'D' and participant twenty obtained a grade 'F'. Of the two participants that did not report any feedback, one passed and the other one got a D.

Finally, as last observation, it is useful to point out that not all participants performed better in those tasks in which they showed learning preferences. For example, students one and two both exhibited the visual sense preference, but only student one did better in the reading tests. Student two, even though he manifested a visual learning preference, got better results in the listening task. The same thing can be concluded for student six who seemed to favour an auditory learning style over the visual one, but obtained much better results in the reading tests than in the listening task. Concerning students ten and sixteen, instead, they manifested their learning preferences in the visual sense, and got better results in the reading tests. Students eleven and twelve showed an auditory preference, and performed better in the listening tests. Student seventeen revealed a marked kinaesthetic learning style, and performed better in the reading tests than in the listening tests; whereas student

nineteen revealed two learning styles: the visual and the kinaesthetic, so, on the one hand, she performed well in the reading tests, but, on the other hand, she also performed well in the listening tests. Concerning student thirteen his preferred learning style seemed to be visual, and even if it is not very clear, apparently he performed a little better in the reading tests, rather than in the listening tests. Student nine, instead, preferred an auditory learning style and did better in the listening tests. Concerning the rest of the students it is more difficult to say in which area they performed better because there was no clear tendency. The information available allows for more observation, considerations and conclusions, but this is precisely the content of the last chapter that follows next. I would like, however, to end this chapter advancing a hypothesis of why some students performed at a certain level and others at a lower level.

As far as I could observe, those learners who achieved better results were also more involved during the development of the course. Such an involvement was made patent through their participation in the class activities, asking and answering questions, posing criticisms about aspects of the language or about the content of the lesson, etc., but fundamentally because their attendance to class was steady. However, I need to say that other learners attended regularly, but did not obtain the same results. For these latter learners, I would not like to think that their timid involvement was due to a lack of interest. I am more inclined to hypothise that other factors, such as anxiety, a low self-esteem, fear of ridicule, or fear of making mistakes were responsible for their modest participation. As I reported when I wrote about the participants, most of them were willing and self-motivated individuals in the sense that everyone wanted to learn English, if only to pass the examination.

So perhaps the observation I made above should be rephrased as to say that the major difference among the participants rooted in their attitude. For some of them their attitude to learning English was tantamount to commitment, determination, and the response to an ongoing process, which did not stop outside the classroom doors; whereas for others, it may have meant something that should be done because it is fashionable, or because society demands it. In either cases though, whether originated internally or exerted from external pressure, I felt that the attitude is the motor behind

students' efforts to search for methods and ways that enhance their learning, namely the search and use of appropriate learning strategies. For some students this search takes longer than for others.

6.7. Discussion and conclusion about the first study

On the basis of the results discussed and the observations made in the previous chapter some conclusions can be reached. To begin with, we can conclude that there seems to exist a direct relationship between strategy use and academic achievement. We have seen that, on the one hand, a great number of learners, whose proficiency profile fell way below the 'mean', used considerably fewer strategies. On the other hand, L2 outcomes that fell above the 'mean' came from those learners who used a wider range of learning strategies. But this is not all. We have also observed that other learners (for example, learner twenty), despite having used a large number of learning strategies, showed scarce progress. In such cases, as in others, it was observed that very few learning strategies associated with the learner's learning style were used. And, on the contrary, it was observed that satisfactory L2 progress was detected in those cases where, not only a good number of strategies were used, but appropriate strategies linked to the learner's preferred perceptual channel were employed. Based on these last observations, it can further be concluded that there seems to exist a direct link between the use of learning strategies that are appropriate to the learner's learning style, and improvement in L2 performance. However, this conclusion needs to be accompanied by a few considerations since, most probably, other factors that can influence learners' L2 outcomes come into play.

In the first place, one can argue that it is reasonable to expect an overall gradual improvement in the test results due to the continued practice in the execution of the tests. This is most probably the case, but it involves all learners equally. It can additionally be argued that the presence or absence of improvement in the L2 may be due to other factors rather than just the right or wrong choice of strategies. For example, in reference to the age range of the participants, it is one thing to speak of a fourteen-year-old learner and quite another if the learner is a seventeen-years-old. It is

not so much a question of L2 proficiency as much as a question of age maturity and life experience, when it comes to confronting topics and listening to material selected and designed for an older public. Undoubtedly, this circumstance will be reflected in the student's scores.

Another factor that can influence scores is gender. The majority of the participants in this study were boys with a minor presence of girls. It can be said, however, that the percentage of successful female learners is very similar to that of boys. Still another differential element is the starting language level of each participant. One can start at a pre-intermediate level and perform with a certain degree of accuracy, and another can start at an upper-intermediate level and perform with a higher degree of accuracy. This circumstance could explain why some learners were able to choose and use a greater number of and more suitable strategies, and others were unable to do so. According to Cummings (1981) there seems to exist a threshold level of proficiency in the L2 below which strategies are not part of learners' studying repertoire. This discriminative element, however, might only partially account for the diversity of results among the participants, since the scores collected in the initial assessment in March (see table 6) indicated that there was no major language proficiency gap among learners.

Another point of discussion can come from the question of whether learning is possible only through the dominant sensory channel. It should be considered that, although described as opposites, learning styles exist on a continuum. In other words, learners are not purely auditory or visual type learners: most of them are of a mixed type. We have seen that among the learning styles there is one dominant style, but this does not imply that it is the only mode through which the students learn. In all cases there is a second learning preference and even a third one. The learners can rely on other channels for intaking information. A learner can still get results if she employs learning strategies that do not fit her dominant learning style and still get results if she consciously applies learning strategies aimed to develop a specific skill, as is the case with student ten.

With this premise it is not possible to ascertain to what extent the use of specific strategies has contributed to the enhancement of a concrete skill such as the ability to

read, understand and answer correctly to a certain number of questions. It is not even possible to state whether the adoption of a specific strategy or groups of strategies which were meant to develop a certain skill, actually brought about the desired changes in that area or it impinged upon other operational areas. But what is possible to confirm is that when certain characteristics are present, recurrent patterns show up. These characteristics can be identified as: learners dedicating time and effort to the tasks; these same learners using a major number of learning strategies; and a good number of strategies used being appropriate to the learner's dominant learning style. The recurrent patterns can be identified as: learners performing much better than the rest; these learners' rate of improvement being higher than the rest; and almost all these learners sitting for the Cambridge examination with the majority of them passing the test.

In conclusion, we can affirm that, although other factors may intervene, there is evidence that learning strategies chosen in accordance with one's preferred learning style favour L2 learning. With this conclusion we can confirm the hypothesis of this study and the original formulation of this thesis which is: given the appropriate learning strategies, learner's performance in foreign language learning should be significantly better compared to that of other learners who do not employ suitable strategies. What remains to be seen is whether the second study reaches the same conclusion.

Before ending this dissertation, I would like to clarify once more that the learners participating in this study did not receive strategy training in the full sense of the word. The course was geared mainly towards the attainment of those linguistic requisites typical of this grade, and towards the preparation of these learners to sit successfully for the FCE examination. Besides the collection of strategies and the few conversations about strategies, there was no real follow-up aimed to measure the frequency of use of a concrete strategy or group of strategies applied to specific tasks. In this sense further research is needed to find out the effects of application of groups of strategies to specific areas. This is, in part, the object of the research in the second study.

This first contact with learning styles and strategies served, however, to make them aware of their condition as learners, to raise their critical self-awareness and

responsibility. They became aware that people learn in different ways, and that people have individual learning styles. They also became aware of the existence of learning strategies which uses were proposed to them. Some learners more than others were able to find out that learning strategies were there to help them to become more effective learners, to become more independent from the teacher, and to raise their self-confidence as learners. Some learners embraced the use of learning strategies with enthusiasm, while others took them on less enthusiastically.

I hope that the contact with learning styles and strategies has meant a turning point in these learners' study lives. I would also like to think that this contact can suppose the first step to become more aware of themselves as persons, to unveil their strengths and weaknesses as learners, and to learn to look for and find those paths that lead to higher effectiveness in an attempt to achieve learner autonomy.

Since this dissertation deals with the new approaches applied to the field of Second/Foreign Language Teaching/Learning, it is time that the people involved in this task help change it from a spoon-fed instructive intervention to a responsible, fulfilling undertaking. In conclusion, a lot can be done in the struggle to help our students to become better learners. The extent to which faculty and educational administrators can provide a learning setting where teachers and learners share responsibilities, where students are facilitated the processes that lead to self-awareness as learners, and where they can come to terms with the learning process, to the same extent we can expect an overall improvement in the performance of our students as second/foreign language learners. As parents raise their children so that they can become independent, as they grow older, so should teaching be envisioned and arranged. Our work should be aimed at gradually handing over the educational responsibility to learners up to the point where learners are fully freed from the teacher’s dependence.

CHAPTER VII: STUDY II

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7.1. Presentation

This study was conducted a few years after the first one and takes on a similar format. However, it differs from the first in that the stages do not coincide and the criteria for measuring the effectiveness of the strategies differ as well. Additionally, some of the preliminary conditions also change. These considerations will be self-explanatory as the study unfolds. It is useful, however, to highlight two major differences between the two studies as well as some important similarities at this point of the chapter.

To begin with, one significant difference is that the two studies address groups made up of opposite sexes. To be more precise, the previous study analyzed two groups: one was only male and the other one was a mixed gender group. The new field-work instead, even though it aims at two groups just as in the first study, addresses students of a single-sexed boy school.

Another distinctive characteristic of the second study is that this one counts on data derived from a questionnaire (appendix B 1) that was run on the first day of class with the purpose of gathering general and personal information about the participants. The data about the learners in the first study were collected during course time. Sometimes, the information emerged through a speaking activity, at other times through a class activity whose objective was to gather information about the classmate's language learning background. The first study did not count on a systematic way of collecting the personal information and the language learning background of the participants.

Moreover, this study eliminates two other variables that were present in the first study. The first one is the age range. While in the first study the ages ranged from 13 to 17 in both groups, in the more recent study the age range was narrowed down to 13-16 in the first group, and to 15-16 in the second group. The other variable was the threshold language level with which the participant entered the course. In the first study there was no real screening with regard to the level of English with which the learners entered the course, in the new study, however, the admission to the course was conditional to a pass mark obtained in a placement test, as will be explained in full detail in the 'Procedure' section of this chapter.

Nevertheless, the two studies share some valuable characteristics. As in the previous study, the majority of these learners live in the same upper-middle class area in the north of Madrid (known as Mirasierra). Likewise, most of these learners attend the same private and selected schools located in this high-income residential area where the study has been conducted. As was pointed out in the previous study, English language learning in this schools holds such a prime position in order of importance among the other subjects that eight hours per week are allocated to the teaching of this subject compared to the four or five hours assigned to the first language and mathematics. This transcendence of the English language is in part the result of the pressure that some influential parents exercise on the schools. They understand that the mastering of this foreign language on the part of their children is vital for their future career.

These parents are so convinced that a solid bilingual education is essential to their children's future, that they go as far as separating themselves from their descendants at such an early age as ten or eleven by sending these children to study abroad in an English speaking country and living with an unknown family. This phenomenon, which at the time of the first study was limited to well-off families, is now widespread to families with less spending power. This does not mean that a greater number of learners in this study, compared to the previous study, had the experience of studying abroad for a term or two. According to the data collected from the questionnaire, the number of students who had the opportunity to learn English abroad is similar in the two studies.

Another similar characteristic in the two studies is that these learners demonstrate self-motivation. This, coupled with their above-average intellectual endowment, make it possible for them to be able to cope with the school's demanding standards while simultaneously engaging in extra-curricular activities such as sports and foreign language training.

7.2. The Setting

The school in question is a highly demanding educational institution which bases its reputation on obtaining excellent results at the end of the senior year of high school. In Spain students who wish to go on with their studies to university have to undergo a state examination or competitive exams, called "selectividad", in order to have access to a position offered by the public university. The access to one or another faculty will depend on the average mark obtained in the last two years of high school and on the university entry examination. The faculties that set high standards to be accessed to are

engineering, in all its branches, medicine, pharmacy, and so on. The majority of the students attending this school come from families whose head is a practitioner in one of these professions or a businessperson who would like their son to follow in their parents' footsteps. Therefore, it is vitally important for these families to have their children score high especially during the junior and senior years. In this respect the school and the families pull in the same direction.

Furthermore, I need to explain that the scheduled classes begin at 9:30 in the morning and go on until 5:00 p.m. Students do their homework or prepare for exams in the late afternoon; they also have sports activities in the evening. Many of the students who sign up for the FCE, CAE, and CPE courses are also engaged in sports and other extra-curricular activities in the evening. For this reason and in order to avoid conflict with the sports schedule, the Cambridge preparatory courses are given in the morning. Some meet on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays starting at 8:30 until 9:25; others meet on Tuesdays and Thursdays starting at 8:00 and finishing at 9:25. This schedule can be particularly hard especially for the 13/14-year-old candidates since they have to get up much earlier in order to get to the English class on time. In addition, some of them walk to school and at that time is still dark. It is not unusual to see students who show signs of tiredness.

7.3. Methodology

This study followed a certain number of stages. The first stage consisted in deciding what kind of students should take part in this study. It was decided that it was paramount that the participants shared similar characteristics to avoid extraneous variables that may alter the study results.

i. The characteristics that seemed more feasible were the same gender, a compact age range, a common social background, a similar degree of motivation to learn English (the students have to wish to register for the course), a certain intellectual capacity, and an acceptable level of dominion of the target language.

ii. The second stage consisted in selecting the participants. The basic characteristics had already been outlined in the first stage but we wanted candidates with a homogeneous threshold level of English, possibly around the B1 level of the

Common European Framework (CEF). Besides, this level, which deals with the intermediate structures of the English language, is the one recommended by the Cambridge University ESOL for anyone who wishes to start preparing to sit the FCE exam. In order to achieve this purpose, the candidates were asked to undergo a placement test that not only tested their knowledge of grammar but also their capacity to cope with the four basic skills in English.

iii. Once the two groups were formed, a questionnaire was run to find out the participants' linguistic background and other aspects of learning. One main reason for the questionnaire was to run a learning style survey to find out the learners' preferred sensory channels.

iv. Once these learners were made aware that they intake information through different sensory channels and that they have a favourite channel or two, the concept of learning strategies was introduced. This happened first by handing out a description of the characteristics of their learning styles together with a proposal of a series of strategies that are compatible with the style(s) in question (see appendices B1a, B1b, B1c and B1d). A heartfelt invitation was made to the participants to try out the proposed strategies. Later during the course more specific learning tips (strategies) were given, suitable to the task at hand; for example, reading tasks, writing tasks, listening or speaking tasks. These strategies are listed in the tables that appear in section eight. During the course, the strategy lists were handed out to the learners so they could apply them while taking the tests. Then, the lists were collected, a copy was made and kept in the learner's file while the original was given back to the learner. That was one way of eliciting strategies from the learners.

v. The next stage had to do with the registration of the test scores. On completion of the first term a set of FCE tests was given. These included a reading, use of English and a listening test. The scores were collected and registered in a table (see appendix ….). More tests were given during the course and the corresponding marks were registered in the appropriate table. Two main reasons lie behind the recording of these marks. On the one hand, it was

necessary to assess the progress of the candidate to produce evidence that the candidate was making the grade. This was essential and served as a basis to propose the candidate for the final exam when the candidate went for the Cambridge title. On the other hand, it was important to measure the degree of progress in view of the fact that these candidates were using the suggested learning strategies when tackling the various parts of the tests.

vi. The last stage of this study consists of a follow-up activity. More specifically, before the tests were given all participants received learning strategy instructions to use with their tests. The strategies were common to all participants, but they had the freedom to choose whichever learning tips they felt comfortable with. Then, the learning strategies that each student used were analysed and confronted with the student's learning style. At this point the test scores were observed to see if there had been an improvement or not with the previous scores and if so to what degree of improvement? A more detailed account of this stage comes up in the next section, but section eight, **Learners' strategies,** offers a complete analysis about the relationship between the learning styles, strategies, and test results of the learners.

However, in order to offer a wider and deeper view of how the study was conducted, I find it necessary to describe the whole process in detail. That is what follows in the next few lines.

7.4. Procedure

7.4.1. Stage 1

In stage 1 of the previous section, it was stated that the study needed to be composed of participants with similar characteristics. In order to achieve such a homogeneous group, the middle school, freshman and sophomore lists were scanned and the best academic reports were selected. Then, a letter was sent out to parents inviting their son to sign up for the FCE preparation course, pending their passing a placement test. Although the criterion for inviting these students was based on the aspects mentioned in stage one of the methodology paragraph (see above), the focus was mainly on their academic achievements and their level of English. Students with an average mark of eight and

above on a scale from one to ten were sought. This mark range was especially useful, for the purpose of this field research, in the subject of English.[23]

7.4.2. Stage 2

However, an eight or a nine in English wasn't enough. There, we arrive at the second stage: selecting the candidates for the course. Knowing that a high mark in English only meant that the student had a good knowledge of grammar, it was necessary to test the threshold level of the four basic skills in English for each candidate. To achieve this aim the applicants were asked to undergo a PET[24] test and were told that only those candidates who scored an average of 65% and above would be considered. This test verified each specific skill: speaking, listening/understanding, reading and writing. The tests were corrected and the scores published in a table with the specific parts of the test and their correspondent mark (see appendix 7). Only at this point could students register in the FCE course, provided that the applicant wanted to sign up for the course and not only because their parents wanted them to. The reason for applying these requirements is further explained in the following lines.

As was emphasized in the section about *the Setting*, the school in question is a high demanding institution. If one of these students struggles through the school subjects scraping marks between fives (a five is the pass mark in Spain) and sixes, he won't have time to dedicate to the study and practice of English as an extra-curricular activity (FCE or CAE course), as he would have to spend more time concentrating on the main subjects such as Mathematics, Language, Science and English as a curricular subject. Again, other requirements needed to be present in order to ensure a certain guarantee of success for these candidates.

Another condition agreed between the teachers who run the Cambridge courses and the parents is that the candidate had to attend at least 85% of the scheduled time. If this condition was not met, the teacher could refuse to let the candidate sit the exam at the

[23] What I want to point out with respect to the type of English given at this school as a subject is that the emphasis is mainly on grammar. Not much time is dedicated to developing the four basic skills: speaking, listening/understanding, reading and writing. On the contrary of the FCE course and other Cambridge courses such as KET, PET, CAE, PCE etc., where the emphasis is exactly on developing the four basic skills and vocabulary. So the FCE preparatory course sets for itself objectives that have nothing to do with the objectives pursued by the regular English classes, and follows a totally different methodology. And it is demanding in itself for other reasons.

[24] PET stands for Preliminary English Test. Its format is similar to the FCE but it is a B1 in the Council of Europe level.

end of the course which is usually in mid-June. In this respect the candidate has to maintain a steady attendance at classes and cannot afford to let his attention wander.

There was still another requirement demanded on the part of the participants. They are given practice work to do at home that has to be handed in every two weeks. The practice work in question is geared towards the structures typical of the B2 level in the Common European Framework in the case of the FCE course and the structures of the C1 levels in the case of the CAE course. As we can see preparing to sit for the FCE or the CAE exam is not a child's play.

I have illustrated these aspects of the Cambridge courses not so much to justify the academic requirements demanded on the candidates, but to show that any other candidate with different characteristics would not have a chance to make it through the course and most importantly to achieve the necessary skills to pass the final examination and so obtain the FCE or the CAE diploma.

7.4.3. Stage 3

The third stage consisted of gathering applicants' information and assessing their learning styles. To achieve this aim a questionnaire was run on the first day of class. The full content and the data gathered from the survey are reported in a proper section following this one. What needs to be highlighted from the questionnaire is the learning style survey. Surprisingly what resulted from the recounting was that about the same number of learners (11) scored high in the auditory sensory channel. In the previous study the score in the auditory sensory perception was about 40%. This percentage was in line with other studies conducted in other countries (e.g. Reid, 1987) which gave Spanish native speakers such a high percentage of auditory preference. In this study too the learners who favour the auditory sense reached 39% of the total.

Indirectly, this stage served to give learners an awareness of learning styles and especially that they had their favourite sensory channels for in-taking information and that was spelled out in a note (see appendices 1A-1D) that each one of them received after the survey. The note, besides specifying their learning styles and a brief description of the characteristics of each style, offered a recommendation for learning strategies that were suitable for that style.

7.4.4. Stage 4

With the introduction of learning strategies, we arrive at the next stage which consisted of proposing to each candidate a series of strategies that were appropriate to their learning style. The note handed to each learner suggested a few general learning approaches compatible with that style, that students could use in every subject and in general in every field of learning. However, as the course advanced, sheets with specific learning tips were handed out to the participants with the invitation to use them. The complete lists of reading, use of English and listening strategies are reported in section eight of this chapter. Some of these learning tips were taken from the resource material for teachers that Cambridge ESOL publishes on the internet. A more detailed account of the sources and characteristics of these strategies is given in the aforementioned section. The point that was made to the candidates was that they did not have to use all of them or most of them at the beginning. What was suggested was that the few or the many strategies they used were appropriate to their learning styles, or to use those they felt more comfortable with at least at the start of the training. I expected the right choices of strategies to have an influence on the high score of the tests. The collection and recording of the test scores leads us to the text stage.

7.4.5. Stage 5

The following step consisted of giving the candidates a series of tests whose scores were registered. These tests, however, were alternated with brief sessions of strategy training. The significance of some strategies were a bit obscure to some learners, so their meaning was explained and the practical application was also made clear. The first series of tests (reading, use of English and listening) were given towards the end of the first term. Other tests were given in January, February and May. These tests followed the same format and simulated the final exam that the candidates were to be given to obtain the Cambridge title. More detailed information as to the number and types of tests is given in section 8 of this chapter. The scores were collected and recorded in two tables which also appear in section eight.

7.4.6. Stage 6

The last stage consisted of matching the candidates' choice of learning strategies, which they used to approach the parts of the tests, with their learning styles. Predictions were then made in reference to the tests' results. This phase comprises the main part of this chapter as an analysis was made about the relationship between styles- strategies-tests results for each candidate. However, before moving on to explore such a relationship, it

is convenient to examine the information provided by the questionnaire mentioned in stage three above.

7.5. Data derived from the candidates' general and personal information questionnaire

What follows is a synthesis of the data that sprang from the questionnaire run among the participants of the two groups. The purpose of this account is to find common characteristics as well as peculiar aspects among such participants. Some of the information that appear from the questions like the gender and the age was already known because it served as the basis for forming the groups.

The questionnaire is composed of five sections: A, B, C, D and E. Section A aims at gathering general information as well as the participants' experience as learners of a foreign language. Section B is a survey on participants' beliefs and ideas about the English language and the best way to learn it. Section C addresses the role of the teacher seen from the participants' point of view. The next section is a classroom work style survey. Finally section E is a learning style inventory. This section will close with general considerations about the data derived from the questionnaire.

7.5.1. General information

The first piece of information that the study brings out is that the participants are all middle and high school students. All of them enrolled in a course conceived and designed to prepare them to sit the FCE and CAE examinations. The course began in October and went on until mid-June, just a few days before the date of the exam. Each class comprised of twelve students. The FCE class met Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 8:30 to 9:30, and the other class met Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8:00 to 9:30.

The questionnaire begins by asking the gender and the age. The participants, being a single-sexed boy school, all answered 'M' for male. The age was then asked. The students could choose between five age groups. The groups being: 13-14, 15-16, 17-18, 19-25 and above 25. In the first class five students fell in the 13-14 range and seven fell in the 15-16 band. In the second class, one student fell in the 13-14 range, whereas eleven fell in the 15-16 band. Therefore, we can say that the average age of the learners in this study was between 14 and 15. The next set of questions was meant to gather general information about their training background.

To the question "How long have you studied English at school?" the answers ranged between six and twelve years with the mean being around nine years. This diversity of figures can be explained, on the one hand, by the fact that those students with a high number of years of English come from the pre-school that belongs to the same group of schools where they are studying now. These schools place a lot of emphasis on English teaching and they start offering the English language even at the age of three. In the case of those students who answered that they had only studied English for six years, they probably came from public schools or other private schools where they only start English learning at the age of six or later.

The next question in the questionnaire was. "Have you attended afternoon/evening courses?" About half of the participants answered that they had not, and the other half answered that they had attended evening courses between one and four years (only one answered 4) and the great majority answered one year. The question that followed was very similar: "Have you received private tutoring?" Almost all the participants answered *no* to this question.

The next three questions are similar but they carry important implications depending on whether the participants choose one or another answer. The three questions are: (i) "Have you ever been abroad in an English speaking country? How many times and how long each time?" (ii) "Have you ever attended school in an English speaking country? For how long?" and (iii) "Have you ever lived in an English speaking country? For how long?"

These three questions need some explanation. The first question aimed to find out whether the participants travelled to English speaking countries for a visit or holiday or for a short period of time, namely two, three or four weeks. This question also included stays motivated by enrollments in English courses that lasted no more than one month, and so it was explained to the participants. Seventeen of the participants answered positively to this question. The next question implied a longer period of stay in these countries motivated by learning courses in English. This question was included because the school runs study-abroad programs (mainly Ireland) where the students live with a host family and attends local public or private schools for a term or two. In some cases the boys are only ten or eleven, which implies a considerable emotional stress as well as an important financial effort. In this respect only seven participants have had the experience of living and studying abroad for three or more months. The third question

was included because some of the parents who send their children to this school are executives (CEOs) of international corporations who may have lived abroad for a long period with their family. However, none of the participants had had the experience of living abroad in an English-speaking country as such. As we can deduce from this analysis, only a reduced number of students have never had direct contact with the target language and culture.

The following question asks about their supposed level of English. Five choices are given: *elementary, pre-intermediate, intermediate, upper-intermediate,* and *advanced.* About half of the participants picked intermediate and the other half upper-intermediate. What needs to be said at this point is that the ideal level for a student to take part in a preparatory course to sit the FCE exam is the intermediate level; while the upper-intermediate is the target level that the participant hopes to reach at the end of the course that will enable him to pass the FCE exam. This classification corresponds to levels B1 and B2 respectively of the Common European Framework.

The next question asks if the participants are studying other foreign languages. About 25% answered that they are studying German, one answered that he was studying Chinese and another one said that he was studying French. The rest gave a negative answer to this question.

To the question "Do you usually look for occasions to speak English?" only three answered *no*. The rest gave a positive answer to this question. Approximately the same number of participants (4) answered negatively to the question: "Do you watch films in English?" The same students who answered *no* to the question above, also answered *no* to this question. A different percentage appears in the question: "Do you ever read English prose?" where 10 participants answered negatively to this question. The majority of students gave a positive answer to the question: "Are you satisfied with the instruction you have received in English so far?" Among those who answered *no*, some explained that they would like more English conversation during lessons. Others wanted native English teachers instead of Spanish teachers teaching English. Still others complained about the low level being given in this subject.

The next question enquires about the motives for learning English:

Are you studying English?

1) to pass the grade at school?

2) because your parents want you to?
3) because English is necessary nowadays?
4) to study abroad?
5) to understand English songs?
6) to get a good job in the future?
7) to travel abroad?
8) because you like it?
9) for personal improvement?

Most participants picked more than 1 answer. Four answered that they wanted to pass the grade at school. The same students answered that their parents wanted them to receive extra training in English. Fifteen students answered positively to the third question, whereas only seven picked the fourth question. The fifth question reveals the least preferred one: only two students said they wanted to learn English in order to understand song lyrics. On the contrary, the sixth question was chosen by twenty of the twenty-four participants. The seventh question received eleven preferences, whereas the eighth question only nine. The last question was picked by six participants.

From these answers, it is patent that these participants recognise the importance of the English language in the world today. Likewise, they seem to be aware of the necessity of mastering this idiom if they want to achieve a successful professional career. From my experience as a teacher and educator for over twenty years, I can say that these qualities are not common among teenagers and I am inclined to believe that such attitudes, behaviours and styles of thinking are the result of parental influence.

The next four questions are asked as an attempt to unveil the participants' personal expectations as learners of English. The first of these four questions is: *How long do you think it will take you to reach a satisfactory level in English? Months_____? Years_____ ?*

The answers ranged from six months to five years, the majority of them being two and three years. Two students answered that it would take the whole life to reach a satisfactory level. The next question is: *Can you see yourself thinking in English? Yes__ No__* . Everybody, except for one, answered positively.

The third question is linked to the previous one and asks: *If this happens in the future, how long will it take? (give an approximate time).* The answers to this question were

varied but the most common answer was between one and three years, very similar to the answers given in the first question.

The fourth and last question of this set asks: *As an English speaker, which dream would you like to see accomplished? Explain:_____* Here the answers are quite varied. Many said they would like to speak fluent English, others that they would like to find a job where English is the vehicular language, while others that they would like to understand all the films and songs in English. Some participants expressed the desire to prepare and sit the Certificate in Advanced English.

7.5.2. Participants' beliefs about English and learning

What needs to be said at this stage is that the questions up to this point of the questionnaire have been formulated by the author of this study. The next sets of questions were taken from other authors. The upcoming set with 18 questions in all was adopted from Nolan (2000: 123). It is a student' belief inventory – beliefs about language learning which seeks to bring to light beliefs and myths about the English language itself and about learning it. The participants read the statement, for example: *English is the most important language in the world.* Then, they have a choice between: 1 = strongly agree; 2 = agree; 3 = disagree; 4 = strongly disagree. There is an extra choice which is *not sure.*

Some of the statements, besides the one cited above, carry deep-rooted common-place ideas about this language. For example: "*In my country people feel it is important to speak English"* or *"It is necessary to know about English-speaking cultures to learn English well."* or "*English as a language is very difficult/easy."*

With the exception of one student, all the participants marked the choices 1 and 2 to the statement *"English is the most important language in the world.*" as well as to the second statement *"In my country people feel it is important to speak English."* and to the third statement "*I think English will be useful for me to get a good job."*

Question number 16: *"English as a language is:__ very difficult;__ difficult; __ moderately difficult; __easy; __ very easy* was answered in the majority of the cases with *moderately difficult* followed by *easy* which was chosen by a quarter of the participants.

The next item on the list asked: *The most difficult aspect of learning English for me is:*

- *speaking*
- *understanding*
- *reading*
- *writing*
- *pronunciation*
- *grammar*
- *vocabulary and idioms*

The students did not have a clear preference as the answers were varied. Not so with the next statement:

"The most important part of learning English for me is:

-speaking fluently

-speaking accurately

-understanding well in most situations

-reading fluently

-writing appropriately

-pronouncing well

-knowing lots of words and idioms

-knowing grammar well"

Speaking fluently was chosen by most participants followed by *understanding well in most situations.* The rest of the choices have also been picked but in a scattered way. The conclusion that we can draw from the answers to this set of questions is that the participants are very much aware of the importance of learning this language. We can also learn that every effort is worthwhile if it leads to the mastering of this language.

7.5.3. The teacher's role survey

The section that comes next addresses the issue of the teacher's role (Nolan, 2000: 124). This survey was chosen to discover the beliefs that students carry with them concerning the role of the teacher, and, at the same time, as an attempt to draw some kind of framework in which to place the participants' responsibility towards the course. In other

words, by defining the teacher's role, the survey was designed to discover to what extent the participants were willing to share responsibility with the teacher; that is the degree of autonomy that the participants were ready to assume.

The first two statements:

1. "*The teacher is an expert who passes on to students all he or she knows about the language.*"

2. "*The teacher is an expert who helps students discover their own most effective way of learning according to the students' needs.*"

received a different treatment by the participants. Fourteen of them chose statement 2; seven chose statements 1 and 2 and only three chose the first statement.

Of the following two statements:

3. *"The teacher should provide lots of opportunities for students to work on, discover and practise the language."*
4. *"The teacher should explain grammar rules and present vocabulary systematically."*

thirteen participants chose the third; eight chose both statements and only three chose the fourth statement.

Even the next two statements:

5." We learn about language in class as a preparation for using it in the real world later."

6." It is important to practise and use English in real-life situations in class as much as possible."

were chosen unequally. Eleven participants chose the sixth statement; nine chose both statements, and only four chose the fifth statement.

Statement 7 was picked by twelve participants, whereas statement 8 was picked by six participants, and another six chose both statements.

7. *"I expect to learn English from the teacher."*
8. *"I think I can learn from other students in the class as well as the teacher."*

Of the following two statements, only eight participants went for option 9, whereas twelve picked statement 10; and only four went for both.

9. "I would like to be capable of planning and organising my own learning with some help from the teacher."

10. "I prefer the teacher to tell me what to learn."

Of the next pair of statements:

11. "I would like to be capable of evaluating my own progress in English."

12. "I prefer the teacher to assess my progress."

Seven participants considered option 11 to be more relevant. More than double (thirteen) considered option 12 to be more relevant and only four went for both proposals.

Fortunately for the teacher, thirteen participants thought that learning depends not so much on the teacher as it does on themselves. Only five felt that it is the teacher's responsibility to make the class interesting and six chose both options.

13. "It is the teacher's job to make lessons interesting and encourage me to learn."

14. "I will learn more if I, the student, participate fully in class and take advantage of what learning opportunities arise."

In conclusion, looking at the overall options selected we can deduce that these participants are ready for a fairly high degree of learning autonomy. It is obvious from their answers that they don't charge the entire responsibility on the teacher's shoulders and they view the foreign language class as another opportunity to learn a new language.

7.5.4. Classroom work style survey

The next section of the questionnaire, section D, is a classroom work style survey. It was designed by Kinsella and Sherak (1993: 227). There are only eight statements and the participants can choose between *yes* and *no*. The statements are reported here:

1. When I work by myself in class, I usually concentrate better and learn more.
2. When I work by myself in class, I often feel frustrated or bored.
3. I prefer working with a group rather than with a partner.
4. When I work with a partner or a small group in class instead of by myself,

I often feel frustrated or as I am wasting time.

5. Most of the time I would rather work with a single partner or in a small group than by myself.
6. Usually, I prefer my teacher to let us form our own group.
7. I hope we will not do too much group work in this class.
8. I hope we will have regular opportunities to work with a partner or a small group in this class.

The *Yes* of the first statement was picked by twenty-three of the twenty-four participants. The *No* of the second statement was chosen by twenty-two participants. Likewise with the third statement, nineteen took *No* as an option. The same resulted with the fourth statement where twenty-three selected the negative option. In the fifth statement the choice was shared: fourteen picked *Yes* and ten picked *No*. The same happened with the sixth statement: thirteen picked *Yes* and eleven *No*. Something similar happened in the next statement. The options were shared equally: twelve and twelve. In the last statements the outcome is a bit surprising; twenty-one picked *Yes* against three who picked *No.*

When it comes to interpreting these results it becomes quite clear that the participants learn best when they work on their own. The great majority don't feel frustrated or bored when working alone. About the same majority would rather work with a partner than with a group. It can also be interpreted that even though the majority would rather work alone, if they have to work with a partner or in a small group that will not cause them frustration or a feeling of time wasting. Question number five doesn't mention class work so it could be interpreted that some participants do not mind getting together with a study partner when doing homework or preparing for an exam. The options in statement six fall equally on both sides. Finally, between statement seven and eight, and especially eight, we can deduce that working with a partner or a small group is very well accepted by the participants, even though they recognise that they may learn more when they work alone.

7.5.5. Learning style inventory

And now we come to section E, which is the last part of the questionnaire. Even this takes the form of a survey and was developed by Kinsella as well (1993: 221). It aims at measuring the perceptual learning preferences of learners. It consists of 32 statements

and the learner can choose between: *usually, sometimes,* and *rarely*. The senses tested are four: the visual, the auditory, the tactile, and the kinaesthetic. However, the survey splits the visual sense in two and makes a distinction between the visual-verbal learning channel and the visual-non-verbal learning channel. In other words, for some learners the written language is what communicates best, whereas for others pictures or visual aids are what transmit the information. In the scoring guide it is also suggested that tactile (handling, touching) and kinaesthetic (moving, doing, experiencing) go together. The scores were calculated and registered in a table that appears in the participants' learning styles section of this chapter.

7.6. Comments on the questionnaire outcome

After scanning through the information contained in this section we can say that we have a wider and deeper view of the protagonists of this study. We now handle information about their training background, their inner wishes and motivations and the various reasons for wanting to go through a training course of the FCE characteristics. We are even aware of the beliefs and prejudices of the English language as such, as well as what they think the role of the teacher should be in this kind of course. The data collected also tell us what kind of classroom interaction and dynamics are preferred by these learners. Finally, and very pertinent to the aim of this dissertation, the last part of this questionnaire discloses the learning styles of the participants in this study. In synthesis, the information gathered confirms the characteristics that were forecasted at the beginning of the study.

7.7. Participants' learning styles

Table 1

Learning Style Chart

	Learning Styles			
PARTICIPANT Nº	vv	vnv	aud	tk
P1	19	16	16	**20**
P2	**18**	12	15	16
P3	18	16	**20**	15
P 4	12	**18**	16	16
P 5	15	10	13	**16**

P 6	18	17	17	**20**
P 7	17	**22**	19	17
P 8	17	16	18	**21**
P 9	9	14	**18**	17
P 10	14	12	19	**20**
P 11	19	11	19	**21**
P 12	16	17	**19**	12
P 13	16	17	**22**	18
P 14	14	14	**16**	**16**
P 15	**20**	17	17	15
P 16	17	**18**	**18**	**18**
P 17	16	20	**21**	20
P 18	11	16	**18**	**18**
P 19	15	**19**	16	13
P 20	15	13	**18**	16
P 21	16	19	19	**20**
P 22	**20**	**20**	19	16
P 23	15	17	**18**	15
P 24	16	17	**20**	**20**

The table beside collects the learning style preferences of the participants. There is a total of 24 participants. The learning styles assessed are: visual-verbal (vv), visual-non-verbal (vnv), auditory (aud), and tactile-kinaesthetic (tk). The preferred style is marked in bold characters. Even though the style that scored the highest mark will carry most of the weight, the next preferred style will also be taken into consideration, especially if the two values are very close, as is the case with a few participants.

As we can see from the figures, only two participants appear to have the visual-verbal sensory preference, comprising only 8% of the total. The participants who favour the visual non-verbal sensory channel are five representing 18% of the total. These two groups together represent about one fourth of the total. Those who prefer the auditory sense are eleven and represent 39% of the total. This percentage is in line with other studies (Reid, 1987) where the native speakers of Spanish prefer the auditory channel in 40% of the cases. The tactile/kinaesthetic sensory channel was chosen by ten candidates and it also represents 35% of the preferences.

The figures appearing in this table indicate that a good number of these learners prefer the spoken word to intake new information, followed by the tactile-kinaesthetic sense which implies handling, touching and experiencing the new data. The written word seems to be the means that communicates less frequently to these learners; but pictures or motion pictures, graphs, drawings, flow charts or any data in picture form represent the preferred way of learning of almost one fifth of the participants. These two sensory

channels put together represent one fourth of the participants. These values are better represented in this table.

Table 2

Sensory Preference Chart

Perceptual Learning Channels	Absolute Values	Percentage Values
Visual Verbal	2	7%
Visual Non-Verbal	5	18%
Auditory	11	39%
Tactile-kinaesthetic	10	36%
Total	**28**	**100%**

It needs to be made clear that the absolute value of 28 does not correspond to the number of subjects in this study. It simply means that 28 is the number of preferred senses that resulted from the survey, due to the fact that some participants scored equal in two sensory channels or even in three as was the case with one participant. Another aspect that needs to be taken into consideration is that this study only analyses the reading and listening skills of its participants. Even though the learning style inventory includes four learning channels, this study will consider only those two styles. The reason for this circumstance is that the scores that this study will be able to collect are derived from reading, listening and grammar (use of English) tasks. The reading tasks (and part of the use of English tasks) are related to the visual verbal sensory channel, whereas the listening tasks are related to the auditory channel. The way this study is conceived does not provide tasks and their relative scores that can be associated to the visual-non-verbal and the tactile-kinaesthetic sensory channels. Therefore, when a candidate's preferred learning style results to be visual-non-verbal or tactile-kinaesthetic, these cannot be addressed, so we have to resort to his next preferred style which can be either the visual or the auditory.

Expressed with other words, only the visual verbal and auditory sensory channels will be addressed. Those participants who showed the tactile-kinaesthetic preference or the visual-non-verbal learning style preference will not be excluded from the study, but

their next preferred learning style will be analysed. The reason for this is that the effectiveness of the learning strategy employment can empirically be contrasted with the test scores from the ESOL papers. The two skills that can be measured are the reading and listening skills that correspond to the visual verbal and auditory channels. The next section covers the language learning strategies used by the participants.

7.8. Participants' strategies

During the English training course, the participants used strategies that were directly related to the four language skills. However, for the sake of this study, the only skills that are being measured are the reading and listening skills. The reason for this decision is that the scores for these two papers are objective in that the correct answers are clear cut. The same cannot be said for the speaking and writing papers, where the subjective component of the person who corrects the paper or evaluates the speaking skill of a learner is inevitable and therefore not quantifiable objectively. Nevertheless, as I stated in the first line of this section, some learning strategy training was provided for the writing and speaking papers, but the outcomes were not registered or recorded for the reason stated above and also because the focus of this dissertation would need to be re-oriented.

However, the participants were also trained to approach the Use of English paper which consists of vocabulary (word formation), structures (sentence transformation), and grammar (direct-indirect speech, passive voice, conditionals, etc.). This learning strategy training was necessary because there is a lot of reading and reading comprehension involved especially in parts one and two of this paper. This means that more reading strategies are needed to deal with these parts of the Use of English paper, and for this reason these strategies are also taken into consideration when evaluating the participants' choice of strategies.

Furthermore, the strategies called for to approach the four parts of this paper are mainly cognitive strategies, which are used to combine, transform, and manipulate the component parts of the target language (see Chapter 3). It presupposes a certain dominium of the target language already. However, a good number of strategies are indirect strategies. These were included in the list to boost the efficacy of the direct strategies. The indirect strategies acquire great importance when used in combination with the direct strategies because they complement one another (see Chapter 3).

Concerning the source of the strategies, they were drawn from the text books (Brook-Hart, 2008) that the candidates used to prepare for the final Cambridge exam. These strategies, referred to as learning tips, are incorporated in the units of the book and are easily identified as they are strategically placed in boxes in which the heading is: "Exam Advice". Other strategies have been collected from the web page that Cambridge ESOL puts at the disposition of learners and teachers that prepare for these exams.[25] Other strategies come from other strategy books (Rubin, 1981: Wenden, 1986: Oxford: 1990; Cohen & Weaver, 2006). The strategies for the reading, the use of English, and the listening papers have been collected in tables and are reported below:

Table 3

Nº	*Reading Strategies*
1	I read the instructions carefully.
2	I read as widely as I can in English, both fiction and non-fiction.
3	I am aware that the multiple-choice questions are presented in the same order as the information in the text.
4	I read the text before reading the questions.
5	I read the text quickly for a first overall impression.
6	I answer the questions by making constant and close reference to the text.

[25] The web site is: www.teacher.cambridgeesol.org/ts/teachingresources

7	I must remember that if a part 1 multiple choice question is an incomplete sentence, the whole sentence must match the text, not just the phrases presented as A, B, C or D. The information in these options may be true in itself, but not work with the sentence *beginning* I am given.
8	I gain an overall idea by reading the gapped text first.
9	I carefully notice the information and ideas that come before and after each gap as well as throughout the whole of the gapped paragraph.
10	I pay close attention to the words and phrases indicating time, cause and effect, exemplification, contrasting arguments, pronouns, repetition, use of verb tenses, etc.
11	I read through part 2 after making my choices to check that everything makes sense.
12	I do not choose my answer too quickly in part 2. I only start to look at the extracts when I have a good idea of what the main text is about.
13	I fill in what I think are the easy gaps first in part 2, and leave the problem areas until last.
14	I think about the text before and after each gap and try to think what's missing.
15	I cross out the choices I have made once I am sure they are the right ones.
16	I focus on the text as a whole.
17	I make sure that I choose the correct option(s) when I find similar information in different sections of the text in 3
18	I train to read for specific information.
19	I scan and skim the text first.
20	I look for sections of the text which are close in meaning to the wording of the questions.
20	I don't choose an answer simply because similar vocabulary is used.
22	I underline key words that can help me identify the main idea in the questions and in the texts.
23	I practise different types of reading (superficial, reading for specific information, reading for details and intensive reading) in order to improve my reading skills.

Table 4

Nº	*Use of English Strategies*
1	In preparing for the Use of English paper I learn not just single words but whole phrases.
2	I read the title of the passage in order to predict what I am going to read.
3	I practise with vocabulary to bring out the difference in meaning between similar words.
4	I also practise grammatical pattern and collocation as an important part of knowing the meaning.

5	I read the text through quickly, jumping the gaps, in order to become familiar with the subject matter and style.
6	I never leave any blank spaces unfilled.
7	First, I fill in the words I'm sure of.
8	If I don't understand the title, I read the first few opening lines to make out the content of the text.
9	Before trying to fill in the blank spaces, I first read the passage quickly to get an idea of the content.
10	I know that the answer will always be one word.
11	The words to fill in will focus more on grammar and structure and less on vocabulary.
12	I pay close attention to how words and ideas are linked.
13	When deciding which word to choose, I look at the words that comes *before* and *after* the blank space and ask myself: Do I need a noun, an adverb, a preposition, an article, a link word, etc. or part of a phrasal verb?
14	I never leave any blank spaces unfilled.
15	I always check that the words are spelled correctly.
16	When I've filled in each word, I re-read the passage to see if it makes sense.
17	In preparing for this part, I practise with word-building.
18	I am aware that word-building involves not just the addition of affixes, but also internal changes and compounding.
19	I develop a systematic and methodical approach to these different types of word formation.
20	I keep a notebook where I write familiar words and practise transforming them from nouns to verbs, adjective, adverbs, etc and vice versa.
21	I ask the teacher for the meaning of unfamiliar words.
22	I keep a dictionary handy to check the meaning and spelling of words.
23	I write sentences and make examples with the new words I come across.
24	I break down long words to figure out their meaning.
25	I am aware that I need to master a wide range of structures such as reported speech, passive voice, conditionals, verb tenses as well as modal verbs.
26	I know that I have to insert the word given in my answer.
27	I know that I cannot change the word given.
28	I also know that I cannot write more than five words in the given space.
29	I know that I need to develop an awareness of parallel and synonymous expressions during my training.
30	I ask my teacher for extra material to train for this part.
31	I make sure that I train extensively to prepare for this part.
32	I try to find out the rule(s) behind a given structure.
33	I break down long words to figure out their meaning.
34	I practise combining words to come up with a new meaning.

Table 5

№	*Listening Strategies*
1	I practise by listening to short extracts of speech and concentrating on understanding the general idea or main points of what I hear.
2	I read the questions on the question paper to help predict what I will hear.
3	I hear as much spoken English as possible.

4	I hear as much variety of English as possible.
5	I listen to English music and watch English films whenever I have the opportunity.
6	I look for opportunities to listen to English outside the classroom
7	I write my answers as clearly as possible; I even use capital letters if it's necessary.
8	I check that my idea of what the correct answer is when I hear the recording the first time is confirmed when I hear it the second time.
9	I use the information on the question paper to help myself follow the oral text.
10	I carefully look at what is printed *before* and *after* the gap and try to anticipate the kind of information that I'll be listening for.
11	I only write the missing information and use only the necessary words.
12	I don't rephrase the words or expressions I hear; I write down the figure(s) or word(s) as they are spoken.
13	I don't spend too much time on a question that I'm having difficulty with, as I know that I might miss the next question.
14	I answer all the questions, even if I am not very sure of the answer.
15	I don't complicate my answer by writing irrelevant data.
16	I listen and read the instructions carefully.
17	I make sure I understand what I have to do.
18	I use the time allowed before hearing each recording to read through all the questions.
19	I first write down the answers I am sure of, knowing that any wrong answers in this part may affect the other answers.
20	I concentrate on understanding in as much depth as possible what speakers say.
21	I don't let individual words or expressions distract me from the main idea of the text.
22	I answer all the questions.
23	I am prepared to change my answer on the second listening when I am not sure of the answer I've written.
24	I write the names or the initials of the speakers on the question paper to help identify them in this part.
25	I mark those answers I'm sure of on the first listening.
26	I underline the key words on the question paper.
27	If I have difficulty with one question, I leave it and concentrate on the next one.

These tables were given to the candidates previous to the execution of a test. The strategies and the way they are used are discussed with the learners. They ask questions, clear up doubts, and the instructor makes sure that they know the functionality of each strategy. Finally, the learners take the test consulting the strategy chart as a reference guide. After each test, the strategy charts are collected by the instructor, photocopied, and kept in the learner's file, while the original is given back to the learner. This is one way of eliciting strategy information from the learners.

The strategies have been collected and put together according to the Cambridge "paper" that the candidates have to deal with. The word "paper" is used in the Cambridge exams terminology to indicate the sections into which the exams are divided. From the First Certificate in English onwards, the exam is divided into five parts: reading, writing, use

of English, listening, and speaking. Each one of these parts is better termed "paper", so that we have *the reading paper*, *the writing paper*, and so on. As for the tables above, we will be dealing with the strategies for the reading paper, for the use of English paper, and for the listening paper. For the purpose of this study only these three papers are reported, although the FCE and CAE exams contain another two papers: the writing and the speaking papers. When the participants use the strategy charts, each strategy is flanked by four boxes *Hardly Ever, Sometimes*, *Often* and *Always*. The participants choose one of these options according to the frequency with which they use that strategy. The frequency is shown in the Learner's Strategy Table. If the learners picked 'Hardly Ever', they get one point; if they picked 'Sometimes', they get two points, and so on, three points for 'Often' and four points for 'Always'. The table also shows the rate of the frequency, which can go from one to four, and the total number of strategies used for that skill.

7.9. Scores

Something needs to be said about the test books that were used during the year[26]. These are test books published by Cambridge University Press designed to provide candidates with test practice. Each book has four full tests with the five papers. The tests are ordered on a gradient scale of difficulty, so that test number one is usually the easiest of the four across the five papers. The difficulty of the ensuing tests increases a bit until it reaches a degree of difficulty in the last test, comparable with the difficulty of the final official exam. Cambridge uses this criterion to encourage candidates in the hope to build up their self-confidence as test takers. This may explain why some marks are high in the first tests. This is especially evident in the reading test one. This needs to be pointed out at this stage as the possible negative tendency of the test scores might give the impression that the language training has produced the opposite results.

The scores were registered during the course and collected in tables. Table 7 below reports all the scores relative to the FCE group, whereas tables 8, 9 and 10 report the scores grouped together in the three different papers: reading, use of English and

[26] First Certificate in English 1
Official Examination Papers from University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations
For Updated Exam with Answers, December 2008
Certificate in Advanced English 1
Official Examination Papers from University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations
For Updated Exam with Answers, December 2008

listening, respectively. The score tables of the CAE (advanced) students will be reported in the next sections.

Table 7

	Test Dec.	Test Dec.	Test Dec	Test Jan.	Test Jan.	Test Jan.	Test Feb.	Test Feb.	Test Feb.	Test May	Test May	Test May
Part.	Read M.45	UoE M.50	List M.30	Read M.45	UoE M.50	List M.30	Read M.45	UoE M.50	List M.30	Read M.45	UoE M.50	List M.30
P1	33	25	19	29	35	26	32	25	23	30	28	21
P2	33	26	20	39	38	25	38	31	18	20	29	20
P3	33	32	22	28	42	23	30	38		24	26	
P4	32	25	21	35	27	17	37	31	29	36	30	22
P5	19	23	16	12	19			18	15	18	12	13
P6	35		23	25	27			29		31		
P7	31	19	20	35	25	19	31	19	14			17
P8	34	29	18	28	28	21	16	35	22	23	29	19
P9	27	25	13	28	27	23		31				17
P10	37	40	27	37	35	24	30	36	26	30	32	26
P11					39	28	21	36	28	32	37	25
P12	16	30	13	25	22	17	42	39	21	26	23	17

FCE Candidates' Test Scores

This table shows which month the tests were given specifying the type of test: reading, use of English and listening. It also shows the maximum score possible: 45 points for the reading paper, 50 points for the use of English paper and 30 points for the listening paper. As we can see from the table, some cells are empty. This means that one or more participants were absent the day of the test. Participant 11 missed the first part of the course because he was studying abroad in an English speaking country.

Table 8

Part.	test 1	test 2	test 3	test 4	Final exam
P1	33	29	32	30	27
P2	33	39	38	20	35
P3	33	28	30	24	28

P4	32	35	37	36	28
P5	19	12		18	
P6	35	25		31	40
P7	31	35	31		
P8	34	28	16	23	32
P9	27	28			24
P10	37	37	30	30	35
P11		30	21	32	25
P12	16	25	42	26	30
Average	30	29,25	30,7	27	30,4

FCE Reading Tests Scores (Max. 45 points).

Table 9

Part.	test 1	test 2	test 3	test 4	Final exam
P1	25	35	25	28	29
P2	26	38	31	29	34
P3	32	42	38	26	33
P4	25	27	31	30	28
P5	23	19	18	12	
P6		27	29		27
P7	19	25	19		
P8	29	28	35	29	32
P9	25	27	31		28
P10	40	35	36	35	38
P11		39	36	37	37
P12	30	22	39	23	33
Average	27.4	30.3	30.7	27.7	31.9

FCE Use of English Tests Scores (Max. 50 points).

Table 10

Part.	test 1	test 2	test 3	test 4	Final exam
P1	19	26	23	21	20
P2	20	25	18	20	17
P3	22	23		18	23
P4	21	17	29	22	23
P5	16		15	13	
P6	23				18
P7	20	19	14	17	
P8	18	21	22	19	16
P9	13	23		17	25
P10	27	24	26	26	27
P11		28	28	25	21

P12	13	17	21	17	17
Average	19,3	22,3	21,8	19.7	20,6

FCE Listening Tests Scores (Max. 30 points).

Tables 8, 9 and 10 report the scores obtained from the tests that were run during the year and that correspond to the reading, use of English and the listening papers respectively. These scores are grouped according to the skill being measured. We can see that a fifth column appears in these tables which does not appear in the general table of the test scores (table 7). This score corresponds to the mark that the candidates obtained in the official final exam in June. The final exam was taken by all the students except candidates five and seven. The next step leads us to the synthesis and analysis of the data collected for each participant with the double purpose of, firstly, predicting whether or not the strategy choice made by each participant suited his learning style, and, secondly, to confirm or deny those predictions by looking at the candidates' performance in the form of his test scores.

7.10. Participants' style-strategies-test scores analysis

This section will combine and analyse the data relative to each participant. In the first place, the participants' learning style(s) are looked at. Then, the strategies that each participant picked in the three modalities, reading, use of English, and listening are collected in a table (Strategy Choice Table), and matched with his learning style. At this point a prediction is made as to his performance and improvement, or lack of it. The next step is to look at the participant's test scores. The participant's scores appear in a table and are represented in a graphical way. The criteria used to determine whether there has been a significant improvement are the following:

- An upward or downward slope in the trend of the participant's scores.
- Whether the participant's scores are above or below the class average scores.
- Whether the scores are above or below the threshold level established by Cambridge ESOL to pass that paper. This value is specified in each paper.

Moreover, since the study does not contrast the two groups as such, but analyses each participant individually, we can say that each participant's performance is scrutinised three times: first against himself, that is, how well he did at the start and at the end of

the course; then, his performance is compared with that of the rest of the class; and finally, his results are contrasted with an exterior agent, namely the Cambridge ESOL testing system. What also needs to be said is that if the candidate's scores better or equal any two of the three reference values above, the candidate's performance shall be considered successful. The following lines will deal with the information relative to the styles, strategies and test results of each participant in this study.

7.10.1. Group 1

Before unfolding this study further, it is useful to supply additional data about this group. To begin with, the first twelve participants belong to the same group that prepared to sit the FCE exam, while the next twelve participants belong to another

Table 11

P1 Strategy Choice Chart			
Strategy Nº	Read	UoE	List
1	1	2	3
2	2	2	4
3	4	1	3
4	2	2	1
5	2	1	4
6	3	4	1
7	3	4	4
8	4	3	4
9	4	1	3
10	4	2	2
11		4	4
12		2	4
13		2	2
14		1	4
15		2	2
16		4	4
17	3	4	4
18	3	4	4
19	2	3	3
20	3	3	3
21	2	3	4
22	2	3	4
23	2		4
24			4
25			3
26			4
27			3
28			
29			
30			
31			
32		2	
33			
34			

Total Strategies	17	23	27
Frequency Rate	2.7	2.6	3.3

group that prepared to sit the CAE exam. In the first group the age ranged from thirteen to sixteen and the average age was fourteen and a half, while in the second group the average age was fifteen and a half. Of the twelve participants of this group, only two decided not to take the final exam. The rest took the exam and eight of them passed it. One candidate that did not pass it, missed it by one point (one over one hundred), and the other candidate did not pass it for three points. These examination outcomes can be considered more than satisfactory considering the age of the candidates and the number of hours (about a hundred) employed to prepare these candidates. What follows is the analysis of the first twelve participants.

Participant 1

This participant exhibited a tactile/kinaesthetic sensory channel with twenty points, followed by a visual verbal learning mode with nineteen points.[27] Since the strategies suggested to learners aimed at developing two specific skills (reading and listening), this participant cannot be analysed on the tactile/kinaesthetic learning mode, for which style we have no strategies that go with it; therefore, we have to take his next preferred channel which is the visual verbal. This learning channel can be taken into consideration because the participant reported using strategies suggested for the reading paper.

The strategies used by this participant have been collected in the table beside. The three columns report the choice of strategies in the reading, use of English and listening modes. The numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4 indicate the frequency with which this participant used that strategy. The table also shows the total number of strategies used for that particular mode, and the frequency rate value, which can go from one to four, the latter being the highest frequency of use possible.

Analysing the reading strategies used by this participant, we can see that of the twenty-three strategies, he only used seventeen. If we refer to the strategy chart on page twenty-two, we notice that he missed out on the main strategies that he should have used with more frequency (1, 5, 19, 22 and 23), but then he made up when he practised intensive and careful reading (6, 8, 9, 10 and 18). On the other hand, he used some indirect strategies (3, 4, 7 and 12) that do not involve the use of language, but function as a support base for the cognitive strategies (see Chapter 3). From the strategy selection

[27] The máximum number of points a participant can get on a certain style is 24.

above, we may expect a slight improvement, if any, in the reading test scores because, in spite of the fact that he used the most appropriate strategy only at times, he did use other strategies that were still compatible with his style with a higher frequency. He scored 2.70 in the frequency rate, which is not a high value. To complete the analysis of the table, we notice that the use of English column has a lot of blanks and the frequency rate is not very high either (2.6/4). In the listening column instead, we see that he used all the strategies and the frequency average is quite high (3.3/4). For this student, I can predict, therefore, that we cannot expect a great improvement, if any, in the reading scores. In the other two modes he will do worse in the use of English scores, but will do well in the listening scores.

The next step is to look at the scores, which appear in the table below. The fifth score is the one the candidate obtained in the official Cambridge exam. The candidate's profile of this exam can be referred to in the appendix 6P1.

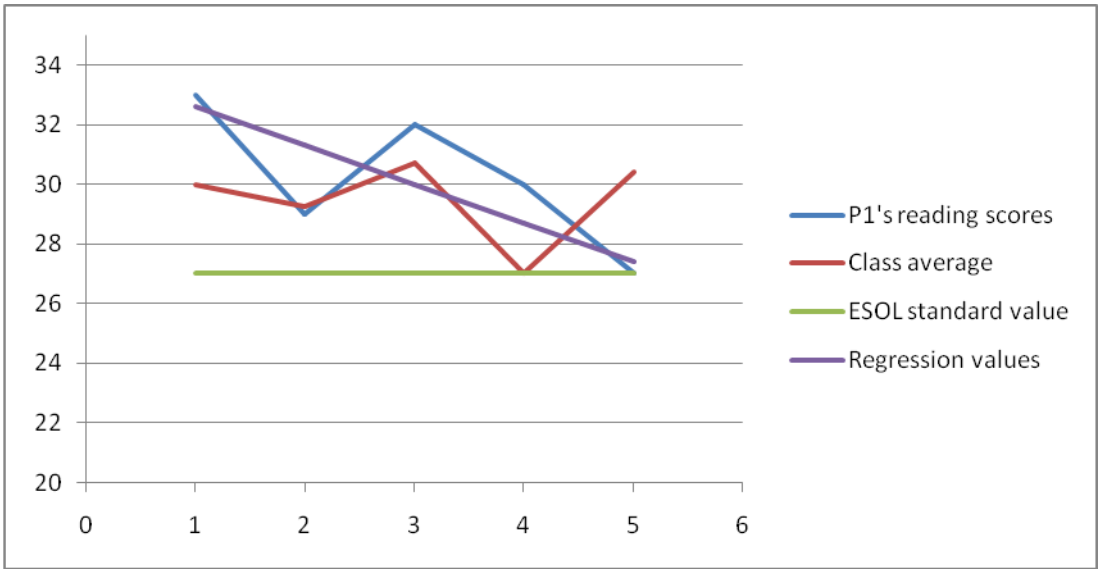
Table 12

Tests	Test 1	Test 2	Test 3	Test 4	Final exam
P1's reading scores	33	29	32	30	27
Class average reading scores	30	29.25	30.7	27	30.4
ESOL standard reading value	27	27	27	27	27
Regression values	33	31	30	29	27

P1's reading scores, class average, ESOL standard value and regression values

The table records the candidate's scores in the reading modality, in addition to the class average for the reading tests, and the ESOL standard value of the for the same test. The reading scores, the class average score and the ESOL standards value when transferred onto a graph give the following profile:

Graph 10



P1 (the blue line) indicates the candidate's scores. The red line reflects the class average scores of the reading tests, while the green line represents the pass mark (27/45) established by ESOL standards. Finally, the purple line illustrates the candidate's regression line which can show an upward or downward trend. In this case the tendency is clearly downward. The last score coincides with the pass level of ESOL standards. Comparing the candidate's scores with the class average, we see that in tests two and five the candidate's scores are below the class average scores, but three test scores are above the class average. Concerning the ESOL standard value, all the participant's scores are above, except in the last test where the score coincides with the standard value. As we can see from the graph, this participant started with a good level but he did not keep it up. One of the references for the rationale to measure the improvement of this participant in the reading skill is clearly negative: the tendency (the regression line). Another reference value, namely the contrast with the class average, is negative in two occasions but it is positive in three occasions. The third reference is undoubtedly positive, all the participant's test marks, with the exception of the last test which coincide, are above the minimum standards established by ESOL This scenery is in line with what was forecasted at the beginning when the styles and strategies matching was described: the forecast did not anticipate a great deal of improvement for the reading modality.

Nevertheless, we should look at the other two modalities as well: use of English and listening. According to the number of strategies used and the frequency rate that goes

with them, the use of English scores should be even lower than the reading scores, and by the same token, the listening scores should be higher that the reading score. The table below reports the scores obtained in the use of English and listening tests, the corresponding values of the class averages and the ESOL standard values.

Table 13

Test	Test 1	Test 2	Test 3	Test 4	Final exam
Use of Engl. scores	25	35	25	28	29
Class average values	27.4	30.3	30.7	27.7	31.9
ESOL standard value	30	30	30	30	30
Listening scores	19	26	23	21	20
Class average values	19.3	22.3	21.8	19.7	20.6
ESOL standard value	18	18	18	18	18

P1's use of English and listening scores. Class average and ESOL standard values.

Here, we notice that with the exception of tests two and four, the values of the other tests are well below the class average, Furthermore, if we compare the test scores with the standard values of ESOL, we see that four scores are below that value. Shifting our attention to the listening scores, we notice that three scores are well above the class averages, and the two values that are under the class averages are so by only a few tenths. However, if we compare the listening scores with the ESOL standard value, we see that all of them are well above the standard value. In order to better appreciate this difference, the following table shows the deviation values of all the tests compared with the class averages and the ESOL standard values.

Table 14

Deviation values	Test 1	Test 2	Test 3	Test 4	Test 5
Difference class average (use of Eng.)	-2.7	4.7	-5.7	0.7	-2.9
Difference ESOL standard (use of Eng.)	-5	5	-5	-2	-1
Difference class average (listening)	-0.3	3.4	1.2	1.3	-0.6
Difference ESOL standard (listening)	1	8	5	3	2

P's1 deviation value table

From this table it becomes clear that the negative values in red outnumber the positive values in green in reference to the use of English scores, as it was foreseen. On the contrary with the scores of the listening tests where the positive values outnumber the negative ones, as it was also foreseen.

In conclusion, if this participant had used a greater number of reading strategies, more suitable to his learning style, he would have got better results in the reading mode. The

Table 15

P2's Strategy Choice Chart			
Strategy Nº	Read	UoE	List
1	4	3	3
2	4	4	4
3	3	2	2
4	4	1	1
5	1	1	2
6	4	3	1
7	1	4	4
8	2	4	3
9	4	4	4
10	3	1	2
11	4	4	3
12	4	4	3
13	4	2	2
14	4	2	2
15	2	4	3
16	3	3	4
17	2	1	4
18	4	2	4
19	1	3	4
20	3	2	4
21	3	1	2
22	1	3	4
23	1	2	3
24		1	1
25		2	
26			
27			
28			
29			
30			

31			
32			
33			
34			
Total strategies	23	25	24
Frequency rate	2.9	2.5	2.9

same can be said for the results in the use of English tests where he used even less strategies and got worse results. On the contrary with the listening tests, where, even though the auditory was not his preferred sensory channel, the candidate supplemented his weakness in the auditory channel utilizing all the strategies available to him and with a high frequency. These conclusions can find a confirmation by looking at the Statement of Results[28] of this candidate in the appendix (6P1). As we can see from the profile, this candidate obtained the FCE diploma with 65% of correct answers thanks to the extra points that he earned in the writing and speaking papers.

Participant 2

This participant's preferred channel is also visual-verbal as he scored eighteen over twenty-four in the learning style inventory and his next preferred style is tactile-kinaesthetic with sixteen points. In the other two styles, visual-non-verbal and auditory he scored twelve and fifteen respectively (see table 1). After the style assessment, this participant was also given the note with the suggested strategies, and he received strategy training during the course as well. The strategies used by this participant are reported in the table beside.

Even with this participant we can say that he misses out on basic reading strategies such as "I underline key words…" and the next one: "I practise different types of reading…". But on the other hand, he deployed all the reading strategies that he had at his disposal, even though the frequency rate is not very high (2.9/4). This situation allows me to predict fairly good results in the execution of the tests. As far as the employment of the use of English strategies is concerned, we can say that he only employed a part of them and with a moderate frequency (2.5). In this mode, I can predict that this candidate will not do as well as in the writing paper. Concerning the listening mode, the candidate used almost all the strategies and the frequency rate coincides with the rate registered for the reading paper. Even in this modality, therefore, we can expect good results in the listening mode. The next step is to look at the scores. The following table shows the reading scores, the class average, and the ESOL standards.

Table 16

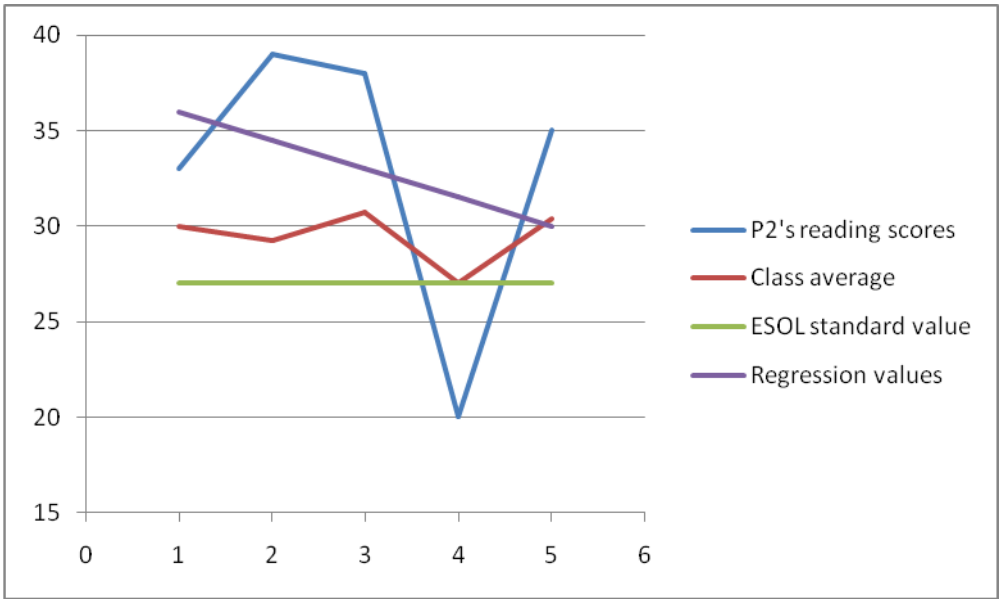
[28] These are issued by Cambridge ESOL and even though do not have the value of a certificate are nonetheless official statements.

Tests	Test 1	Test 2	Test 3	Test 4	Final exam
Reading scores	33	39	38	20	35
Class average	30	29.25	30.7	27	30.4
ESOL standards	27	27	27	27	27
Regression values	36	34,5	33	31,5	30

P2's reading scores, class average, ESOL standard and regression values

Contrasting the reading scores with the two references above, we can see that the score values are much higher than the values of the two references, except in test four. In the first test, this participant scored 3 points above the class average, in the second test he scored 9.75 points above the average; in the third test he scored 7.3 points above average, while in the fourth test he had a downfall: he scored seven points below average, but he picked up again in the last score marking a difference of 4.6 points. The difference is even bigger if we compare these values with the ESOL standard values. But let us transport these figures onto a graph.

Graph 11



From the graph, we see that the regression line is downward. This would indicate that there has not been any progress. However, if we turn to the other two reference values, we see that the position of the blue line (the candidate's scores) is well above the class average scores, except for one score; and if we compare it with the green line (ESOL

standard) the difference is even wider. We can conclude, therefore, that the prediction for this candidate was correct.

At this point it would be interesting to verify the forecast for the use of English and the listening modes. For this purpose I report their scores and show them in a table.

Table 17

Test Nº	Test 1	Test 2	Test 3	Test 4	Test 5
Use of English scores	26	38	31	29	34
Class average scores	27.4	30.3	30.7	27.7	31.9
ESOL standard value	30	30	30	30	30
Listening scores	20	25	18	20	17
Class average scores	19.3	22.3	21.8	19.7	20.6
ESOL standard value	18	18	18	18	18

P2's use of English and listening scores. Class average and ESOL standard value

These numbers do not indicate much, unless we calculate their deviation values.

Table 18

Deviation values	Test 1	Test 2	Test 3	Test 4	Test 5
Difference class average (use of Eng.)	-1.4	7.7	0.3	1.3	2.1
Difference ESOL standard (use of Eng.)	-4	8	1	-1	4
Difference class average (listening)	0.7	2.7	-3.8	0.3	-3.6
Difference ESOL standard (listening)	2	7	0	2	-1

P2's use of English and listening deviation values

From the results of this table we see that the positive values outnumber the negative ones in the two modalities, use of English and listening as it was foreseen in the analysis of the style-strategies above. These conclusions are also reflected in the Statement of Results issued by Cambridge ESOL (see appendix 6 P2). In this participant's profile we observe that his best score was in the reading paper, followed by a pass score in the use of English paper, and a score below borderline in the listening paper. The first two

results respond to the prevision, whereas the result for the listening paper did not respond to the forecast. This candidate, however, obtained the FCE diploma with a score of 66/100.

Table 18

P3's Strategy Choice			
Strategy Nº	Read	UoE	List
1		2	3
2	1	2	4
3	2	2	3
4	3		
5	1		3
6	3		1
7	2		1
8	2		2
9	3		1
10	2		3
11	3		2
12			4
13			2
14			3
15			2
16			
17			
18			1
19			1
20			2
21			3
22			
23			2
24			4
25			
26			
27			2
28			
29			
30			
31			
32			
33			
34			
Total strategies	10	3	21
Frequency rate	2.2	2	2.3

Participant 3

This participant exhibited an auditory sensory preference with twenty points, followed by the visual verbal sensory channel with eighteen points. The other two senses, visual-non-verbal and tactile-kinaesthetic registered sixteen and fifteen points respectively. This participant hardly reported using any strategies for the reading paper. The same thing happened for the use of English strategy list: he only reported using three strategies in all. He did, however, use some of the strategies listed in the listening strategy chart. The table on the left shows the totality of the listening strategies used and their frequency. From the chart we can notice that basic listening strategies such as *I look for opportunities to listen to English outside the classroom* and *I hear as much spoken English as possible* were almost never employed. Besides, the frequency rate is not high either; it is just above two. On the other hand, when the first general studying tips were given out, after the style assessment survey was conducted, this participant reported studying with a classmate on certain occasions such as before a test or an exam. This is a vital strategy for an auditory style learner as he uses this sensory channel to intake new information.

Summarizing this participant's use of appropriate strategies for his preferred style, it can be said that he did use a fair amount of appropriate strategies, even though he could have used more strategies and with a higher frequency. The prevision for this participant is positive. He should show an upward trend in the listening scores.

So, looking at the scores' table we report the following value for this participant: 22, 23, 23, 18 and 23.

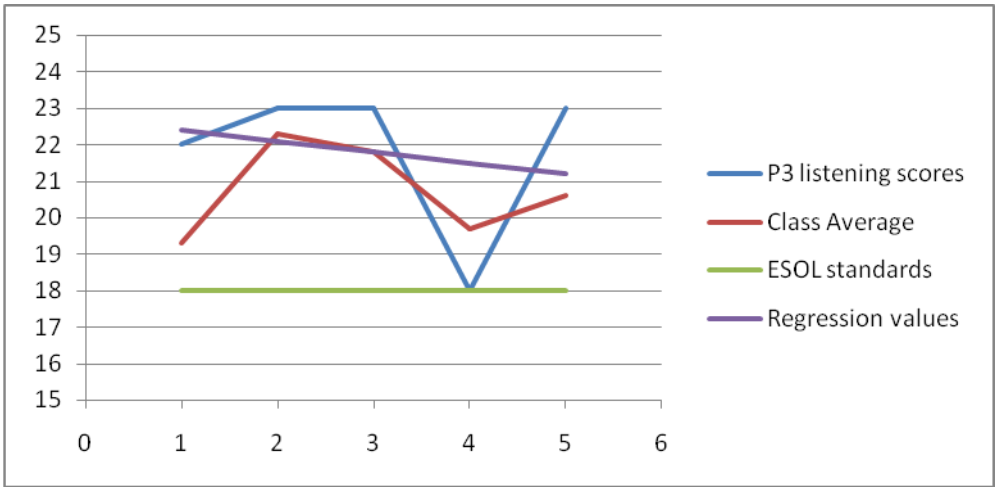
Table 19

Tests	1	2	3	4	5
P3's listening scores	22	23	23	18	23
Class Average scores	19,3	22,3	21,8	19,7	20,6
ESOL standard	18	18	18	18	18
Regression values	22,4	22,1	21,8	21,5	21,2

P3's listening scores, class average, ESOL standard and regression values

If we focus our attention on the participant's listening scores and compared them with the class average and standard values, we notice that the participant's figures are higher, at least in most of them. This difference, however, will be more patent when these figures are transferred onto the following graph.

Graph 13



The graph shows P3's regression line to be slightly downward. However, if we compare his scores to the class average values we observe that, with the exception of the fourth test, they are all above those values. This difference is even bigger if we compare P3's scores to the ESOL standard values. Evaluating these results, we can conclude that the forecast for this participant was correct since two of the reference values were positive, even though one of them was not. Concerning the reading and the use of English papers there is not much that can be said since the number of strategies used is very small. What can be reported is the participant's performance at the final exam. According to the Statement of Results (appendix 6 P3) the reading score appears above the

"Borderline", which means at least sixty-four percent of answers are correct, and the use of English score between "Borderline" and "Good" meaning that the percentage of correct answers is at least sixty-eight. This participant obtained the FCE diploma with a pass mark of 66/100 being speaking his best mark followed by the listening mode, as can be seen from the candidate's profile.

Table 20 *Participant 4*

P4's Strategy Choice Chart			
Strategy Nº	Read	UoE	List
1	4	1	3
2	2	4	4
3	3		2
4	4	2	1
5	3	4	2
6	4	4	1
7	2	4	2
8	4	4	3
9	3	4	4
10	2	4	2
11	3	4	2
12	1	3	2
13	4	2	3
14	2	2	4
15	4		4
16	2		4
17	4		4
18	3		4
19	4		4
20	4		4
21	1		4
22	2		
23	1		4
24			1
25			4
26			2
27			3
28			
29			
30			
31			
32			
33			
34			

Total strategies	23	13	26
Frequency rate	2.9	3.2	3.0

The fourth participant exhibits a visual-non-verbal style preference with eighteen points against the sixteen points summed up in the auditory and tactile-kinaesthetic and twelve points in the visual verbal styles. This participant used a wide variety of strategies especially reading and listening strategies and he was also very active in changing his choice of strategies as the course progressed. The following table shows the strategies and the frequency with which these strategies were used.

From the table, we can see that this participant used the lot of reading and listening strategies as well as a good number of strategies of the use of English mode. Besides, the frequency rate is high in the three modalities as well. The forecast for this students is, therefore, quite positive. However, a provision must be made in this case. According to the outcome in the learning style inventory, his preferred learning style resulted being the visual-non-verbal, and his next best learning channel the auditory and the tactile-kinaesthetic with the same punctuation. The visual verbal was left way behind with only twelve points compared to the first choice that was eighteen points. In this study we are measuring only the visual verbal and the auditory learning channels. So, we may expect good results in the listening tests due to the great number of strategies used in this mode and to the high frequency rate (3.0/4). We may also expect good progress in the reading tests. Although the visual-verbal did not result among his favourite style, he may have compensated it with an extensive use of reading strategies and a fairly high frequency rate (2.9/4).

The next step is to take a look at the listening scores and contrast them with the class average and the ESOL standards. The following table synthesises this information:

Table 21

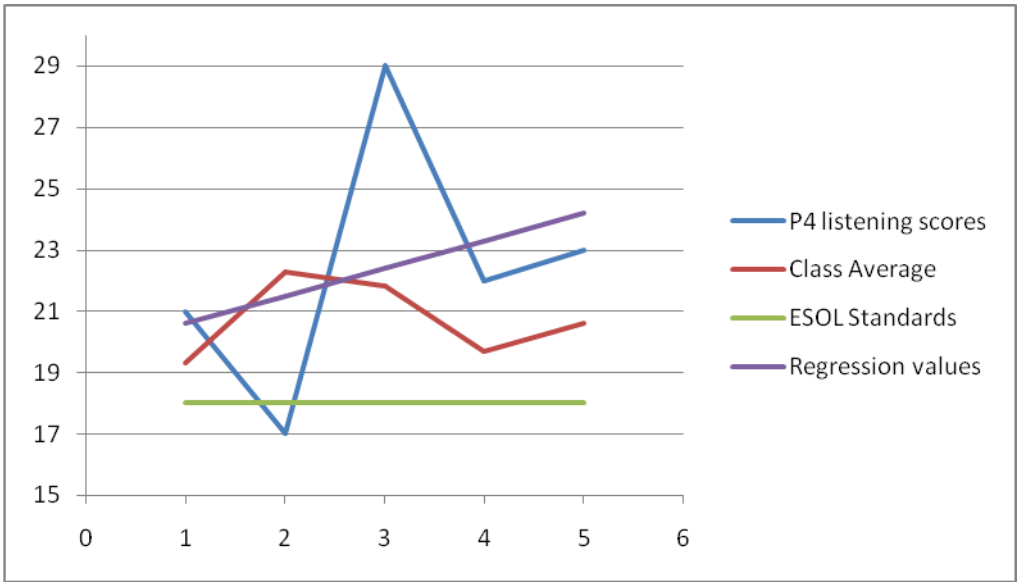
Tests	1	2	3	4	5
P4's listening scores	21	17	29	22	23
Class Average	19.3	22.3	21.8	19.7	20.6
ESOL Standard	18	18	18	18	18
Regression values	20.6	21.5	22.4	23.3	24.2

P4's listening scores, class average, ESOL standard and regression values

At first sight we see an overall progression in the values of the test scores. With only one exception we see that the tests' values are above the class average and also above

the ESOL standards. These values transferred onto a graph give us a visual idea of the contrast.

Graph 13



From the graph, we observe that the three reference values are fulfilled. The regression line is positive, the values of the tests are superior to the class average and they are superior of the ESOL standards as well. We can conclude therefore that the prediction for this candidate was correct.

For the sake of completing the picture for this participant, let us take a look at the reading and use of English scores. The best way is to gather this information in a table.

Table 22

Tests	1	2	3	4	5
P4's reading scores	32	35	37	36	28
Class average reading scores	30	29,25	30,7	27	30,4
ESOL standard reading value	27	27	27	27	27
P4's use of English scores	25	27	31	30	28
Class average use of English scores	27,4	30,3	30,6	27,7	31,9
ESOL standard use of English value	30	30	30	30	30

P4's reading scores, class average, ESOL standard and regression line

If we contrast the test values with the class average values and the ESOL standard values we get the following table:

Table 23

Reading tests contrast with class average	2	5,75	6,3	7	-2,4
Reading tests contrast with ESOL standard	5	5,75	10	9	1
Use of Eng. tests contrast with Class average	-2,4	-3,3	0,4	2,3	-3,9
Use of Eng. tests contrast with ESOL standard	-5	-3	1	0	-2

P4's reading and use of English deviation values

From the table, we see that in the reading tests nine out of ten outcomes are positive, but the opposite is true in the use of English tests' contrast. These figures are in line with what was foreseen at the style-strategy stage when it was predicted that the candidate could do well in the reading test, notwithstanding his weak perceptual channel which he compensated with a large use of strategies. This participant missed the pass grade for one point. He scored 59/100, where the general pass mark is sixty. However, if we look at the Statement of Results (appendix 6 P4) issued by Cambridge ESOL, we observe that the highest score is exactly in the listening test; the reading score is above the minimum pass mark, and the use of English is below the borderline. This description reflects quite accurately the forecast that was advanced at the beginning of this section. The candidate failed to obtain the FCE diploma because he got a low mark in the writing paper.

Candidate 5

The fifth participant presents characteristics totally different from the previous one. Since the beginning of the course, this student showed little or no interest in the language learning strategies. In fact, the strategy charts that the instructor collected after each test were blank. In an oral interview this participant expressed his conviction that the strategies were a waste of time. This particular learner had spent a full term studying abroad in an English speaking country, so his spoken English was very close to native speakers' standards. Nonetheless, he could not see the utility of using language learning strategies. This participant exhibited a tactile-kinaesthetic perceptual preference with sixteen points, followed by the visual-verbal channel with fifteen points, then the auditory sensory perception with thirteen points and finally the visual-non-verbal with ten points. I cannot offer any figures relative to the learning strategies as he decidedly chose not to use any. Moreover, he decided not to sit the Cambridge exam. He is one of the two candidates of the whole group (24) who did not attempt the final exam. I cannot therefore attempt any prediction as I have no base on which to judge. What I dispose of,

though, is the scores of some tests that the participant took during the course. The table below registers the scores he obtained in the three modalities and their values compared with the class score average and the ESOL standard. The score of test five is not included in the table because the participant did not sit for the final exam, so it could not be reported. We can also observe that one score is missing in each of the three modalities because he was absent on some of the testing days. After the above introduction, what I can foresee is that this participant will not show any progress in any one of the paper tests.

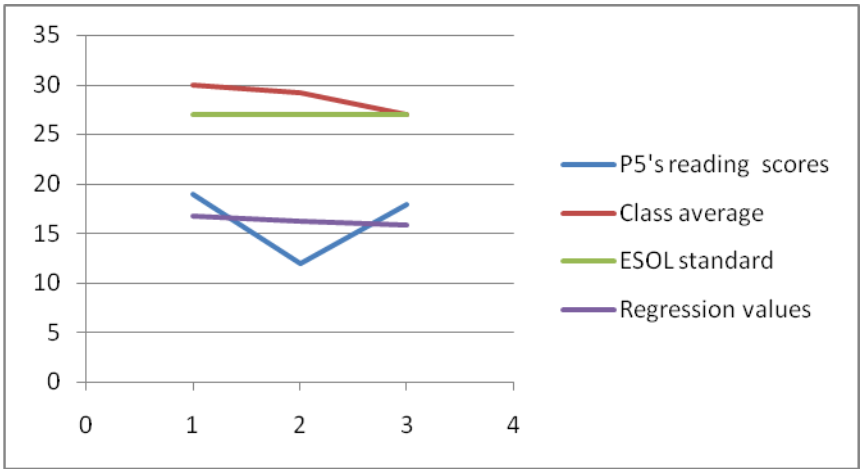
Table 24

Tests	1	2	3	4	5
Reading scores	19	12		18	
Class averages	30	29,25	30,7	27	30,4
ESOL standard	27	27	27	27	27
Use of English scores	23	19	18	12	
Class averages	27,4	30,3	30,6	27,7	31,9
ESOL standard	27,4	30,3	30,6	27,7	31,9
Listening scores	16		15	13	
Class averages	19,3	22,3	21,8	19,7	20,6
ESOL standard	18	18	18	18	18

P5's reading, use of English and listening scores, class average and ESOL standard values

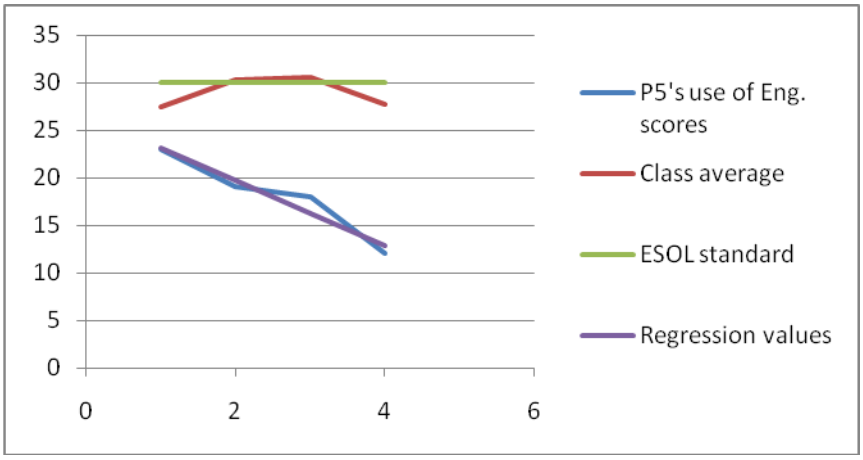
We should be able to better appreciate the improvement, or lack of improvement, as is the case with this participant, once these values are represented onto a graph. There is one graph for each set of scores, which means one graph for each of the three papers: reading, use of English and listening.

Graph 14



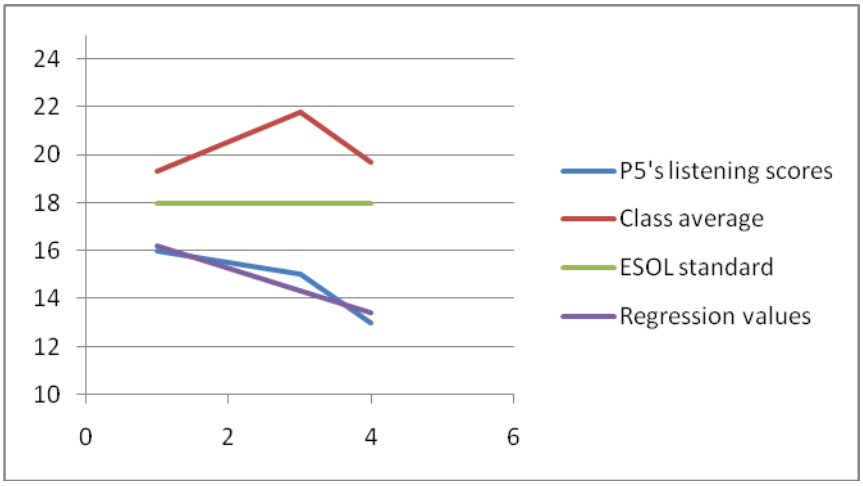
P5 Reading scores, class average, ESOL standard

Graph 15



P5's use of English scores, class average and ESOL standard

Graph 16



P5's listening scores, class average and ESOL standard

A clear descending trend of the score line is evident in the three papers. The regression line is also decreasing. Besides, the same score line runs below the minimum required to make the grade according to the Cambridge's pass mark. (Cambridge establishes the pass mark around 60% of correct answers, which is equivalent, in the case of the reading paper, to 27 over 45; in the case of the use of English paper to 30 points over 50; and in the case of the listening paper to 18 over 30). Going back to the interpretation of the graphs, we can observe that the score line is also below the class average in the three modalities as the graphs are showing. The conclusion that we can reach in reference to this participant is that, based on the figures that we handle, not only has there not been any progress but there has been a regression. This happened notwithstanding the perfect command that this student showed of the spoken language. Finally, he made no use of the strategies that he had available.

Participant 6

The sixth participant exhibited a tactile-kinaesthetic sensory preference with twenty points. His next preferred learning channel was visual-verbal with eighteen points, followed by the visual-non-verbal and the auditory perceptual senses with sixteen points in both modes. The main characteristic of this participant was his irregularity in the attendance. Of the eighty hours that the course consisted of, he missed twenty-five, which is equivalent to almost one third of the total number of hours. As far as strategies are concerned, he used very few. In the reading paper, he marked only six strategies, and of these, he used mainly four. The same happened with the strategies proposed for the use of English paper. He marked thirteen strategies, but he only made use of two. The same can be said with the use of strategies in the listening paper. He marked eight strategies in total, but only five were used frequently. In an oral interview concerning strategy use, he did not seem enthusiastic about using learning strategies at all. Apparently, he did not see the purpose for them. I was under the impression that he lacked the necessary motivation to do well in the course. Moreover, he was absent in many of those days when the tests were given. In fact, there are only a few test results registered from this participant. On the other hand, this candidate, like the previous one, exhibited an excellent level of spoken English. His family had sent him to a summer camp with native speakers of English for the last seven years, so his speaking skill was almost flawless and with a near-native accent. The following table reports the few strategies that this participant used across the three papers.

Table 25

P6's Strategy Choice Chart			
Strategy Nº	Read	UoE	List
1	3	3	4
2	4	4	4
3	1	2	2
4	4	2	
5	1	1	2
6	4	4	2
7		2	4
8		1	4
9		1	3
10		1	
11		3	
12		2	
13		2	
14		1	
Total nº	6	13	8
Frequency rate	2.8	1.8	3.1

As we can see, this participant did not make a profuse use of strategies. He relied more on his strong points (oral skills), thinking that these would be enough to get him through the course. With the information that I have, my prevision is that this candidate will not do very well, at least in the reading mode. He used very few reading strategies, even though the frequency rate is fairly high. The number of listening strategies is also very small, but the frequency rate is quite high, so he may do better in the listening tests than in the reading tests. As far as the use of English mode is concerned, although he used about half of the strategies available, the frequency rate is quite low, so I don't think he will do well in the use of English tests either.

At this point we turn to the test scores of this participant. The following table shows this participant's test results for the reading paper.

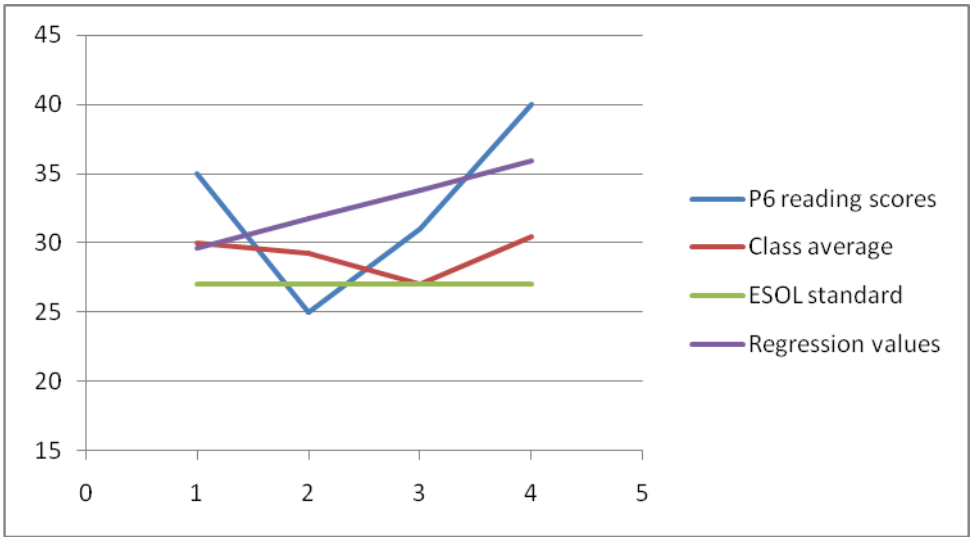
Table 26

P6's reading scores, class average, ESOL standard and regression values

Tests	1	2	3	4
P6's reading scores	35	25	31	40
Class average scores	30	29.25	27	30.4
ESOL standard value	27	27	27	27
Regression values	29.6	31.7	33.8	35.9

The table above reports only four scores instead of five. This is due to the fact that the participant was absent on the day of the test. These values transferred onto a graph give us the following picture:

Graph 16



The regression line has an upward trend; it has therefore a positive value. Moreover, if we compare the score values with the class average values we observe that, with the exception of test two, they are superior. The same can be said, if we compare the participant's value with the ESOL standard value. So, the fact that this participant has used few reading strategies did not impede him to obtain good results. These results contradict the previsions that were made for this participant in the reading tests. Let us look at the other two test sets.

Table 27

Tests	1	2	3	4	Final exam
P6 use of English test scores		27	29		27
Use of English class averages scores	27.4	30.3	30.6	27.7	31.9
Use of English ESOL standard value	30	30	30	30	30
P6 listening test scores	23				18
class average Listening scores	19.3	22.3	21.8	19.7	20.6
Listening ESOL standard value	18	18	18	18	18

P6's use of English and listening scores; class average and ESOL standard values.

From this table, we see that some test scores are missing. In the use of English line test, scores one and four are missing and in the listening line test scores two, three, and four are missing. If we contrast these figures we get the differences below.

Table 27

Use of English class average differences		-3.3	-1.6	-4.9
Use of English ESOL standard differences		-3	-1	-3
Listening class average differences	3.7			-1.4
Listening ESOL standard differences	5			0

P6's deviation value table

The values in red in the use of English paper indicate that the difference between the scores registered by the participant and the class average values is negative, which means that the participant performed below the class average. This result is in line with what was foreseen for this participant in this paper after analysing the number of strategies employed in this modality and its rate of frequency. The same conclusion can be reached in the listening modality. Two values are positive, one is negative and another breaks even. For the listening paper, the participant employed very few strategies even though the rate of frequency was rather high. These observations and related conclusions can be confirmed by looking at the Statement of Results (see appendix 6 P6) of this participant. He obtained a very high grade in the reading paper, which must have reached nearly ninety per cent of correct answers. In this paper my forecast was wrong. In the speaking paper, instead, such a good result was foreseeable because of the candidate's excellent command of spoken English. In the case of the use of English paper, the participant obtained a poor result having scored below the "Weak" line, as was foreseen at the beginning. In the case of the listening paper, the results are a bit better, but still not very good as the mark is below border line, as was also anticipated at the beginning. This participant obtained the FCE diploma thanks to his excellent performance in the reading and speaking papers.

Table 28 *Participant 7*

P7's Strategy Choice Chart			
Strategy Nº	Read	UoE	List
1	4	2	3
2		3	4
3	3	2	4
4		3	2
5		1	3
6		2	4
7		4	3
8		4	4
9		2	4
10		4	3
11		2	3
12		4	2
13		3	2
14		4	4
15		4	2
16		3	3
17		2	3

18		4	3
19		4	2
20		2	3
21		3	3
22		4	4
23		1	4
24		3	2
25		2	4
26		1	3
27		3	4
28		3	
29		1	
30		3	
31		2	
32		1	
33		3	
Total strategies	2	33	27
Frequency rate	3.5	2.7	3.1

This participant exhibited a visual-non-verbal sensory channel with twenty-two points. His next perceptual preference was the auditory style with nineteen points followed by the visual verbal and tactile-kinaesthetic with seventeen points in each mode. As I anticipated at the beginning of this study, because we will not be able to analyse the visual-non-verbal learning style, the next preferred sensory channel, which is the auditory, will be explored. Concerning strategy use, he hardly used any reading strategies as recommended in the strategy chart, but he made extensive use of the strategies proposed in the use of English list, where more reading strategies are suggested especially in parts one and two of this paper. However, he employed all the strategies proposed in the listening list. On the left is the table which collects the strategies used by this participant.

This participant made large use of listening strategies which are suitable to his second best learning channel. His frequency rate is also high. Concerning the use of English strategies, he also employed them widely even though the frequency rate is slightly lower. The forecast for this participant is positive as he employed a good number of strategies that fit with his learning style. We expect a good progression of marks in the listening paper. The following table reports the listening scores, the class average values and the ESOL standard values.

Table 29

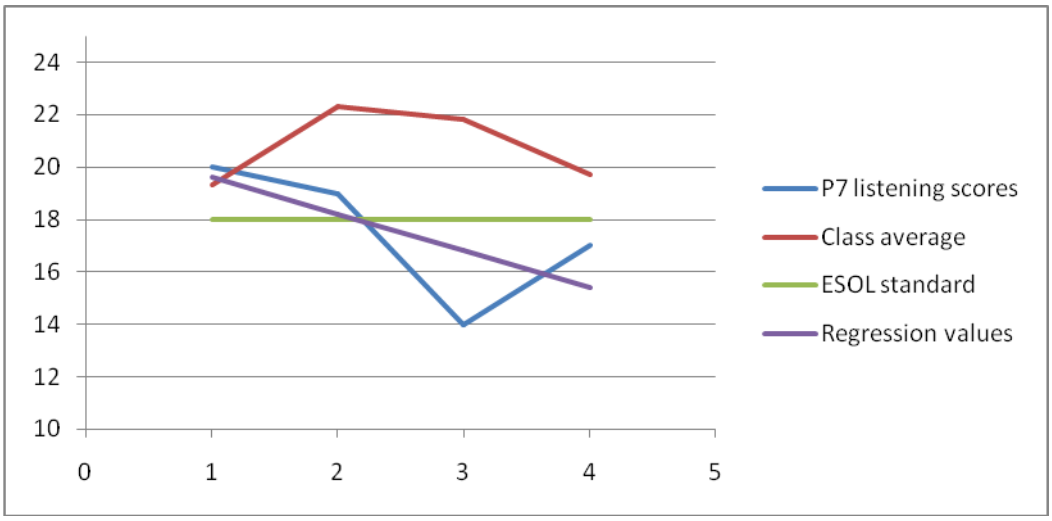
Tests	1	2	3	4

P7's listening scores	20	19	14	17
Class score average	19.3	22.3	21.8	19.7
ESOL standard value	18	18	18	18
Regression line	19.6	18.2	16.8	15.4

P7's listening scores, class average, ESOL standard and regression line

By looking at the scores, at first sight we see the listening score values in a decreasing trend. We also see that some of these values are clearly below the class average values and half of them are below the ESOL standard values. This participant only has four marks because he did not sit the final exam. But let us transfer these values onto a graph.

Graph 17



The blue line, which represents the participant's score values, is clearly below the class average values, except in the first test. It is also below the ESOL standard in at least two tests, and the regression line has a downward trend. Good results were expected from this participant due to the good number of listening strategies and the high rate of frequency with which he used them, but the results reflect the opposite reality. The forecast with this participant was decidedly wrong. To complete the description of this participant let us look at the scores of the other two papers. These figures are reported in the table below.

Table 30

Tests	1	2	3
P7's reading scores	31	35	31
Class average reading values	30	29.25	30.7
ESOL standard values	27	27	27
P 7's use of English scores	19	25	19
Class average use of English values	27.4	30.3	30.6
ESOL standard value	30	30	30

P7's Reading and use of English scores and standard value table

From the table we see only three scores reported. This participant's attendance has been constant during the course and he also showed great interest in the course material and the learning strategies. However, he might have lost interest towards the end of the course once he had decided not to sit the final exam in the June session. Nonetheless, in order to get a more explicit view of how these values compare, let us look at them in the next table.

Table 31

Reading scores class average difference	1	5.75	0.3
Reading scores ESOL standard difference	4	8	4
Use of English scores class average diff.	-8.4	-5.3	-11.6
Use of English scores ESOL standard diff.	-11	-5	-11

P7's deviation value table

From this table, we see that the reading values compared with the class average and the ESOL standard values are all positive for the participant. We could not predict that as the participant has reported hardly using any reading strategies, and yet results have been positive in this area. On the other hand, I expected some fairly good results from the use of English tests, based on the fact that strategies in this area had been widely used, and yet the results have been rather negative. The previsions for this participant have been totally wrong across the three modalities: listening, reading and use of English.

Table 32 *Participant 8*

P8's Strategy Choice Chart			
Strategy Nº	Read	UoE	List
1		3	3
2		2	3
3		2	2
4		2	2
5		1	3
6		4	2
7		4	3
8		4	3
9		2	3
10	1	1	4
11	2	3	3
12	3	2	3
13	1	3	4
14	3	4	4
15	1	3	3
16		4	3
17		1	3
18		4	3
19		4	4
20		3	4

21		3	2
22		2	4
23		4	3
24		3	3
25		3	4
26		3	3
27		1	4
28		2	
29		1	
30		3	
31		3	
32		2	
33		2	
34		2	
Total strategies	6	34	27
Frequency rate	1.8	2.6	3.1

The eighth participant exhibited a tactile-kinaesthetic learning style as he summed up twenty-one points out of a possible twenty-four, followed by the auditory sensory mode with eighteen points. The other perceptual channel was the visual-verbal, with seventeen points, and the visual-non-verbal with sixteen points. Again, as we have no scores and no strategies that can be related to the tactile-kanaesthetic learning mode, we have to pick the next preferred learning style which is the auditory channel. As far as strategies are concerned, this particular participant used all kinds of strategies, since the beginning of the course, and he went on modifying his strategy choice as the course progressed. Apparently, he did not deploy many reading strategies (only 6), but in an oral interview he stated that when he studied he used some kind of study aid such as notes, drawings, and highlighter pens. Let us examine the number of strategies and their frequency rate in the table beside.

As far as we can see, this candidate used a limited number of reading strategies and with a low frequency (1.8). On the other hand, in the reading strategy list he marked other strategies that were not listed, such as taking notes, making summaries or highlighting main concepts with a highlighter marker. He has, however, used all the strategies proposed for the use of English paper and with a good degree of frequency (2.6). The paper where he has made a sustained use of strategies is in the listening paper (3.1). Since this candidate's second preferred style is auditory, we should expect a fairly good performance in the listening paper scores. We may also expect good performance in the use of English tests, but not good results for the reading paper tests. The following table summarizes this candidate's listening scores and also reports the class average results and the ESOL standard value as well as the regression line values.

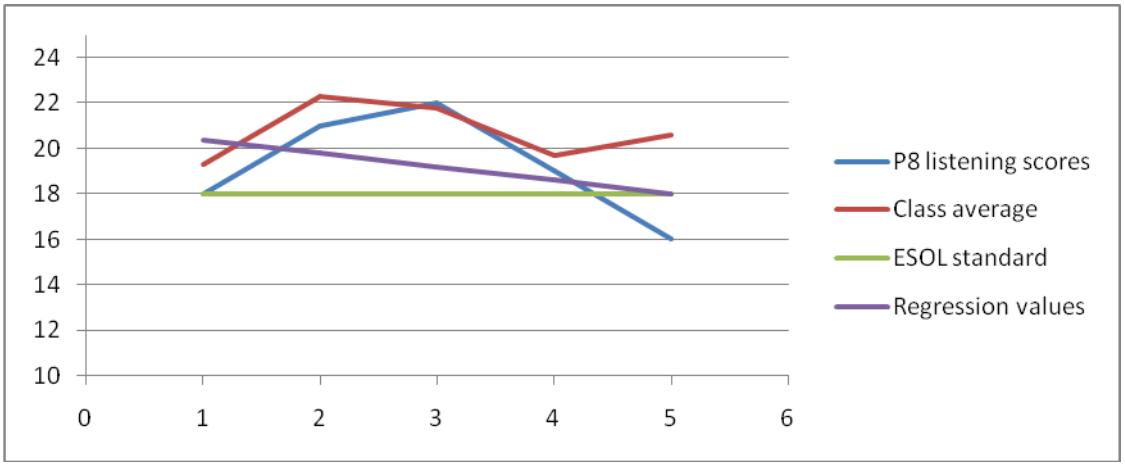
Table 32

Tests	1	2	3	4	Final exam
P8's listening scores	18	21	22	19	16
Class average listening scores	19.3	22.3	21.8	19.7	20.6
ESOL standard listening values	18	18	18	18	18
Regression values	20.4	19.8	19.2	18.6	18

P8 listening scores, class average listening and ESOL standard values

These figures become more explicit if we represent them on a graph.

Graph 18



As we can see from the graph, the regression line is decreasing; even though the slope is not very steep, there are more than two points of difference between the first and the last value. Moreover, except for the scores in the third test, the participant's score are lower compared to the class average values. And if we compare the test scores with the ESOL standard values, we notice that only three scores are above the ESOL standard, one score value coincides with the standard value, and the last listening score is two points below the standard value. Facing this evidence, we cannot say that the prevision that I made about the listening scores of this participant was accurate. It is just the opposite. Let us examine the scores in the other two test modalities. The table below reports the figures.

Table 32

Tests	1	2	3	4	Final exam
P8's reading scores	34	28	16	23	32
Class average reading values	30	29.25	30.7	27	30.4
ESOL standard reading values	27	27	27	27	27

P8's use of English scores	29	28	35	29	32
Class average use of English values	27.4	30.3	30.6	27.7	31.9
ESOL standard use of English values	30	30	30	30	30

P8's reading and use of English scores, class average and ESOL standard values.

At a glance, we see that the scores and the values fluctuate. There is no clear tendency, either in the reading or in the use of English domain. The following table will give a more explicit idea of how these figures compare.

Table 33

Class average reading value difference	4	-1.25	-14.7	-4	1.6
ESOL standard reading values difference	7	1	-9	-4	5
Class average use of English values difference	1.6	-2.3	4.4	1.3	0.1
ESOL standard use of English values difference	-1	-2	5	-1	2

P8's deviation value table.

As we can observe, the scores and values contrasted do not offer a clear tendency. In the reading papers, five scores are above the reference values and five scores are below those reference values. These results do not confirm or reject the prediction that was made for this test paper. However, it must be said that if we refer to the Statement of Results we observe that the reading score is well positioned close to the 'good' band. Just about the same can be observed with the use of English results. The original prediction was that this participant would do well, at least in the use of English paper owing to a good number of strategies used in this modality. As far as we can see, six values are positive, which in a way confirms the prediction, and four are negative. If we refer to the Statement of Results, we also notice that the use of English final score is close to the "Good". In conclusion, we can say that the prediction for the listening mode results did not meet with the expectations, whereas the forecast for the use of English paper scores was accurate. Finally, the predictions for the reading paper could go either way, and in the end the results are positive. To sum up, the results of this participant are a bit atypical, given that he used a great number of strategies, many of which are suitable to his learning style, he did not get the expected results. On the other hand, we cannot say that his results are negative as this participant obtained the FCE diploma with a pass mark of 61/100 thanks to the good performance in reading, use of English

and speaking. We have to conclude, therefore, that the overall results for this participant are positive.

Table 34 *Participant 9*

P9's Strategy Choice Chart			
Strategy **N**º	Read.	UoE.	List.
1		2	2
2		3	3
3		2	4
4		1	2
5		1	3
6		4	2
7		4	2
8		4	3
9		4	4
10		3	2
11		1	2
12		2	1
13		2	4
14		1	4
15		2	3
16		4	3
17		2	3
18		4	2

19			4
20			3
21			2
22			4
23			3
24			1
25			4
26			2
27			4
Total strategies	0	18	27
Frequency rate	0	2.5	2.8

The next participant exhibited an auditory learning style with eighteen points. His next preferred learning style was tactile-kinaesthetic with seventeen points, followed by the visual-non-verbal learning mode with fourteen points and the visual verbal sensory perception with nine points. As far as his strategy choice is concerned, he used practically no strategies from the reading strategy list, he used some strategies from the use of English strategy list, but he employed, even if only at times, a good number of strategies from the listening strategy list. The table below gathers the strategies used by this participant.

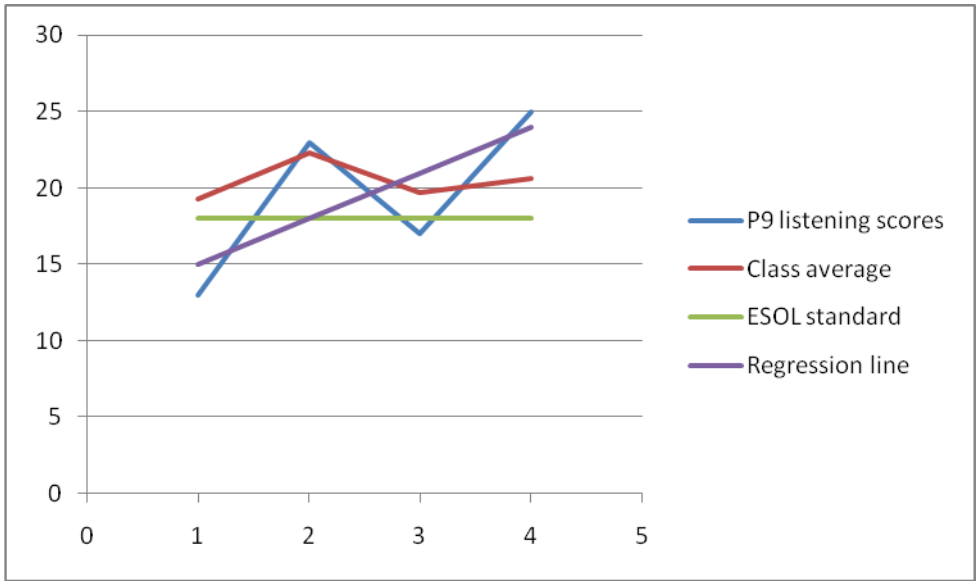
From the data at hand, we see that this participant used all the strategies listed in the listening chart and with a good degree of frequency (2.8). This candidate's preferred learning channel is precisely the auditory learning sense. I can predict, therefore, that this participant should do well in the results of the listening tests. He also used a fair amount of strategies from the use of English list, some with a fair frequency and others with a lower frequency. The average rate though is above two (2.5). The table below reports the participant's listening scores together with the class average values, the ESOL standard value and the regression values.

Table 35

Tests	1	2	3	4
P9's listening scores	13	23	17	25
Class average listening values	19.3	22.3	19.7	20.6
ESOl standard values	18	18	18	18
Regression line values	15	18	21	24

This participant missed the third test; this is why only four tests appear in the table. These values, however, give a wider view when they appear represented on a graph.

Graph 19



As we can see, even though the scores are low, the trend is upward. The first mark is six points below the average of the class and five points under the minimum Cambridge requirements. The mark of the second score picked up quite a bit and is slightly above the class average (22.3) and five points above the passing grade established by Cambridge. The third mark falls again and is below the class average and the Cambridge standards. The last mark, however, picks up again with nineteen points, which means one point above the minimum required (18), and half point above the class average (18.5). This can be considered a typical case of a learner who is weak on a certain skill and that after the proper training acquired the necessary skills and knowledge to approach the task successfully. In conclusion, the prediction with this participant was confirmed by the results. As far as the results of the other two papers, let us look at their values in the following tables.

Table 36

P9's reading scores	27	28			24
Class average reading scores	30	29.25	30.7	27	30.4
ESOL standard reading values	27	27	27	27	27
P9's use of English scores	25	27	31		28
Class average use of English scores	27.4	30.3	30.6	27.7	31.9
ESOL standard use of English values	30	30	30	30	30

P9's reading and use of English scores, class average and ESOL standard values

From the table we see that this participant missed tests three and four of the reading paper and test four of the use of English paper. At a glance we see that the reading scores are below the class average values and are not above the ESOL standard values. The same can be said with the use of English values. However, we can calculate the difference between the participant's scores and the class average and ESOL standard values and show them in the table below.

Table 37

Class average reading value difference	-3	-1.25		-6.4
ESOL standard reading values difference	0	1		-3
Class average use of English values difference	-2.4	-3.3	0.4	-3.9
ESOL standard use of English values difference	-5	-3	1	-2

P9's reading and use of English deviation table.

We can tell from the figures in red that the difference between the reading and the use of English scores and the class average and the ESOL standard values is negative, which means that the performance of this participant in these two papers has been poor. These results are in line with what was forecasted in the initial phase of the analysis of this participant. As a matter of fact, a further confirmation of these figures can be derived from the Statements of Results of this participant where the position of the reading mark is below the weak line and the position of the use of English mark is just above the weak line but below the borderline. In the same profile we observe that the highest score (78/100) is precisely in the listening paper, as was forecasted at the beginning of this analysis. This candidate obtained a punctuation of 57/100, not sufficient to be granted the FCE diploma. The paper where he lost most points is exactly in the reading paper.

Table 38 *Participant 10*

P10's Strategy Choice Chart

Strategy Nº	Read	UoE	List
1		3	4
2		4	4
3		2	2
4		1	2
5		4	4
6		4	2
7		4	
8		4	
9		2	
10	1	1	
11	4	4	
12	2	4	
13	3	4	
14	1	3	
15	2	2	
16		4	4
17		4	4
18		1	3
19		3	3
20		1	4
21		2	2
22		3	4
23		3	4
24		1	2
25		4	3
26		1	4
27		4	4
28		4	

29		2	
30			
31			
32			
33			
34			
Total strategies	6	29	18
Frequency rate	2.2	2.9	3.3

The preferred learning mode of this participant is tactile-kinaesthetic. He summed up twenty points in this modality followed by the auditory learning mode in which he summed up nineteen points. The least preferred perceptual channel of this learner is visual-non-verbal with twelve points followed by the visual verbal channel with fourteen points. As with the previous participant, we will take into consideration the auditory learning style since we have no scores to refer to the tactile-kinaesthetic learning channel. Referring to the strategy choice of this participant it must be said that he used very few reading strategies, but he was very active in the use of English strategy list. He also employed a good number of strategies from the listening list. The table below shows the strategies used by this participant.

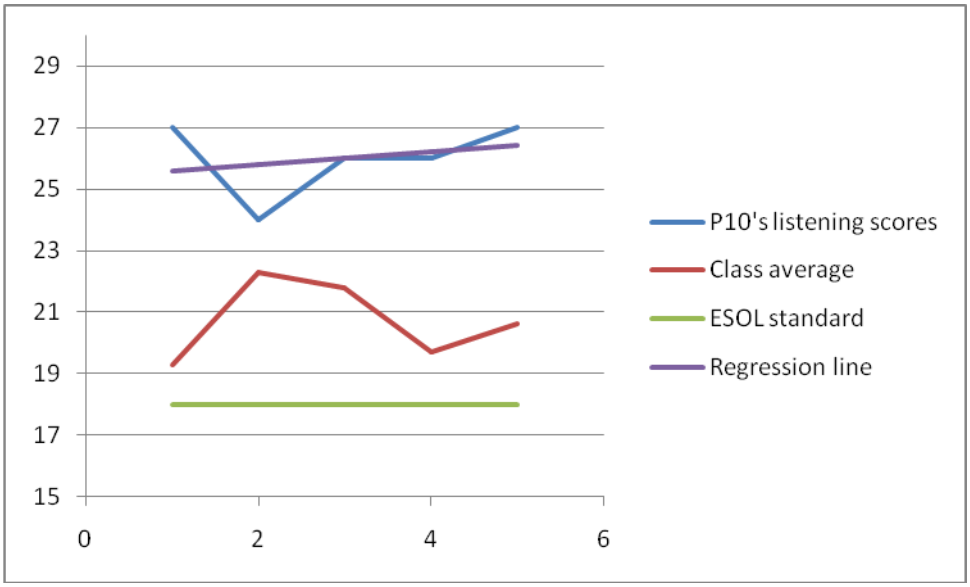
This participant used very few reading strategies. On the other hand, he employed a good number of use of English strategies and also a fair number of listening strategies. The average rate of the listening strategies is very high, and it is also considerable the average rate of the use of English strategies, not so much the average rate of the reading strategies. It should also be said that this participant mastered the oral part of the target language skillfully because he had spent a summer or two in an English speaking country. With the data at hand, this candidate should be able to produce very good results, at least in the area related with the listening paper and the use of English paper. The results of the listening tests have been collected and are shown together with the class average values, the ESOL standard values and the regression values in the table below.

Table 38

Tests	1	2	3	4	5
P10's listening scores	27	24	26	26	27
Class average listening scores	19.3	22.3	21.8	19.7	20.6
ESOL standard value	18	18	18	18	18
Regression line	25.6	25.8	26	26.2	26.4

At first sight, we can notice that this candidate's test results are higher that the class average scores and much higher than the standard value. The regression values are also registering ascending values. However, in order to get the visual perspective, it is a good idea to transfer these figures onto a graph as was done with other participants.

Graph 20



As we can see, the listening results of this participant are well above the reference values. The regression line is also upward even if only slightly so. In the first test there is a difference of eight points with a class average and a difference of nine points with the ESOL standard. About the same difference is maintained in the last test. I can, therefore, conclude that the prevision that was anticipated for this candidate was confirmed by the results. Nonetheless, we should also look at the test results of the other two papers. This is best done by presenting the figures in a table.

Table 39

P10's reading scores	37	37	30	30	35
Class average reading scores	30	29.25	30.7	27	30.4
ESOL standard reading values	27	27	27	27	27
P10's use of English scores	40	35	36	35	38
Class average use of English scores	27.4	30.3	30.6	27.7	31.9
ESOL standard use of English values	30	30	30	30	30

P10's reading and use of English scores, class average and ESOL standard values

Most of this participant's scores are well above the class average values and the ESOL standard values. Moreover, we can say that some of the scores fluctuate around 80% of correct answers, even though we cannot say that we are facing an upward trend of the score values. However, we can represent these differences in a table.

Table 40

Class average reading value difference	7	7.75	-0.7	3	4.6
ESOL standard reading values difference	10	10	3	3	8
Class average use of English values difference	12.6	4.7	5.4	7.3	6.1
ESOL standard use of English values difference	10	5	6	5	8

P10's reading and use of English deviation table.

From this table, we can observe that with one exception all the figures are positive and sometimes the difference is as much as twelve points. These results are backed up by the Statement of Results of this participant (see appendix 6 P10) where we can see that some marks approximate the exceptional band. This candidate obtained the FCE diploma with a mark of 76/100. In the case of this candidate too, his results confirmed the forecast that was advanced for him.

Participant 11

This participant's preferred learning style is very similar to the previous learner. He showed preference for the tactile-kinaesthetic learning mode with twenty-one points, followed by the auditory and the visual-verbal sensory channels with nineteen points.

However, he did not seem to favour the visual-non-verbal style in which he only summed up fourteen points.

Table 41

P11's Strategy Choice Chart			
Strategy Nº	Read	UoE	List
1	2	3	
2		2	
3		2	2
4	2	3	1
5		3	3
6	3	4	1
7		1	4
8		1	3
9		4	3
10		2	2
11		1	1
12		2	
13		3	3
14		3	4
15			2
16			1
17		1	4
18		1	2
19			2
20		3	4
21		3	2
22		2	4
23		3	4
24		3	2

25			4
26		3	3
27		3	3
28		2	
29		4	
30		4	
31		4	
32		2	
33			
34			
Total strategies	3	28	24
Frequency rate	2.3	2.6	2.7

Even in this case, I will take into consideration the participant's next preferred learning style for not being able to contrast the strategy choice with concrete scores related to the tactile-kinaesthetic mode. He scored equally in the visual-verbal and the auditory sensory channels. I am going to choose the auditory style because reviewing the strategy lists of this participant, we observe that he marked only three strategies in the reading strategy list and only one (Nº 6) was marked as 'often'. In the use of English strategy list he marked almost all of them and the majority fell in the 'Often'-'Always' columns. About the same thing happened in the listening strategy list. The table beside is drawn to give a global view of the reading, use of English and listening strategies used by this participant.

The strategies listed and used by this participant, whose values are listed above with the corresponding number of strategies used and the frequency rate, suggest that he may have obtained good results especially in the listening and the use of English tests, but not in the reading tests. According to the procedure of this study, we will analyse the listening scores first. This participant missed the first listening test, because he joined the group three months later. In the second and third test, he scored twenty-eight out of thirty, then twenty-five in the fourth test and twenty-three in the final exam. Let us examine these figures collected in the next table.

Table 42

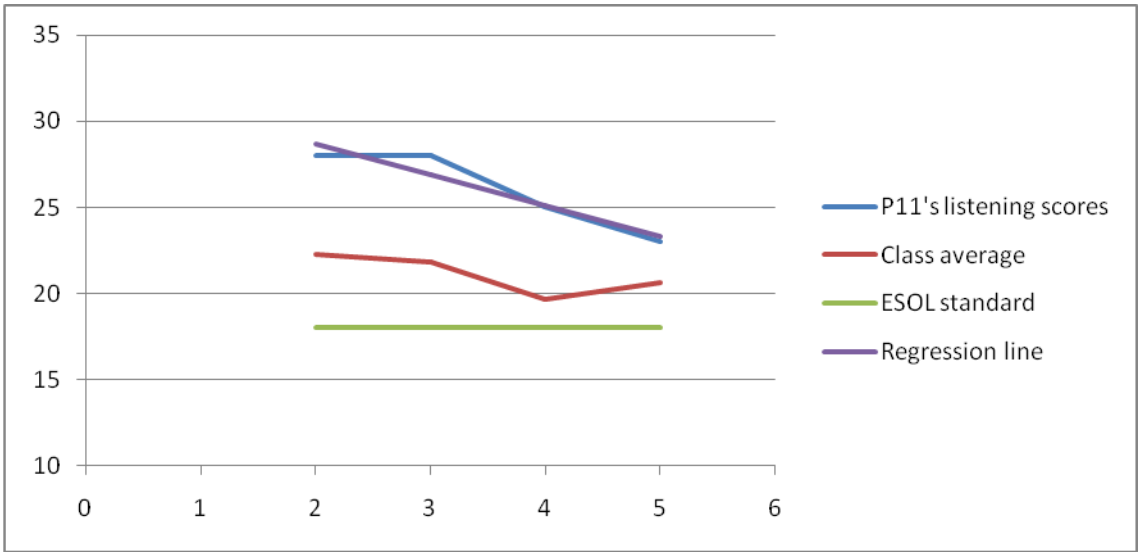
Tests	1	2	3	4	5
P11's listening scores	0	28	28	25	23
Class average listening scores	0	22.3	21.8	19.7	20.6
ESOL standard value	0	18	18	18	18
Regression values	0	28.7	26.9	25.1	23.3

P11's listening scores, class average, ESOL standard and regression values.

At first sight, the listening score values are superior to the class average values and well above the ESOL standard value. Nonetheless, this participant started with very high marks (28/30), which he could not keep in the subsequent tests and inevitably decreased

in value. Even so, the participant's scores are much better compared to the other two reference values as the graph is showing.

Graph 21



As we can see, the regression line has a downward trend, which could suggest a worsening of ability in this particular skill. However, if we take into consideration the absolute value of the first and the second scores, we observe that twenty-eight points is very close to the maximum value possible (30), and way above the class average (22.2, 21.8). The same can be said for the absolute values of the fourth and fifth tests. However, this is not all. If we contrast the absolute values of this candidate against the minimum required by Cambridge, we get a difference of ten points above the minimum. In the fourth and fifth test scores the difference is six and five points respectively. If we convert these figures in percentages we get that in the second and third test he obtained 93% correct answers, in the fourth test 80% of correct answers and in the third test 77% of correct answers. To conclude, even this participant did as well as was expected of him. Let us look at the reading and use of English test scores. This table summarizes the figures.

Table 43

P11's reading scores	30	21	32	25
Class average reading scores	29.25	30.7	27	30.4
ESOL standard reading values	27	27	27	27
P11's use of English scores	39	36	37	37
Class average use of English scores	30.3	30.6	27.7	31.9
ESOL standard use of English values	30	30	30	30

P11's reading and use of English scores, class average and ESOL standard values.

To better appreciate the difference between the scores and the other reference values, it is more practical to show such differences in the table below.

Table 44

Class average reading value difference	0.75	-9.3	5	-5.4
ESOL standard reading values difference	3	-6	5	-2
Class average use of English values difference	8.7	5.4	9.3	5.1
ESOL standard use of English values difference	9	6	6	7

P11's reading and use of English deviation table.

The figures in the table show that the difference between the reading scores and the class average values are half positive and half negative, which is an indication that the performance in the reading tests has been somehow poor, as was forecasted at the beginning of this analysis. On the other hand, the results that appear in the use of English mode are all positive, which indicates that the performance in the use of English tests has been rather good, again, as was foreseen at the beginning of this analysis. These results are being confirmed by the Statement of Results (see appendix 6 P11), the official candidate profile issued by ESOL examinations. In the profile, we clearly see the position of the reading mark which is just above the "Weak" line. On the other hand, we notice the listening and use of English positions which are close to the "Good" line. This participant obtained the FCE diploma with a pass mark of 68/100 and got a C. If he had performed in the reading paper as well as in the listening or use of English paper, he would have passed the exam with a B.

Table 45 *Participant 12*

P12's Strategy Choice Chart			
Strategy Nº	Read	UoE	List
1		2	4
2		4	4
3		3	2
4		2	2

5		1	2
6		4	2
7		4	3
8		4	3
9		2	3
10		1	4
11		4	2
12		2	2
13		2	3
14		3	3
15		2	2
16		3	
17	2	1	
18	1	4	
19	1	4	
20	3	3	
21	1	2	
22	2	2	
23	3	4	
24		3	
25		3	
26		2	
27		1	
28		2	
29		1	

30		3	
31		2	
32		1	
33		1	
34		2	
Total strategies	7	34	15
Frequency rate	1,9	2,5	2,7

The next participant showed an auditory sensory channel as he summed up nineteen points in this learning mode. His next preferred style appears to be visual-non-verbal with seventeen points, followed by the visual-verbal learning channel with sixteen points and finally with the tactile-kinaesthetic mode with twelve points. Referring to his strategy choice, it must be said that he used few strategies from the reading strategy list, he marked all strategies from the use of English strategy list, the majority of them were used *sometimes*, *often* and *always*, and finally he used a fair amount of strategies taken from the listening strategy list. The following table shows a compilation of such strategies.

By looking at this participant's strategy choice, we can observe that he used some strategies suitable to his style (auditory), but also that he should have used with more frequency some of the most common listening strategies. What this participant missed doing was deploying such basic strategy as "I hear as much spoken English as possible" and "I hear as much variety of English as possible" as well as strategy five and six. Oxford (see chapter three) places these strategies in the first place because she considers this way of going about learning vital for a foreign language learner. In the case of this learner, he may have taken little advantage of his preferred learning sensory channel, by not practising enough listening. This, added to the fact that he used few strategies compatible with his style, leads us to predict a rather low profile for this participant's test results. I have to add, however, that the frequency rate is fairly high; so, the results might not be altogether bad after all. The table below reports the participant´s listening scores with the values of the two references.

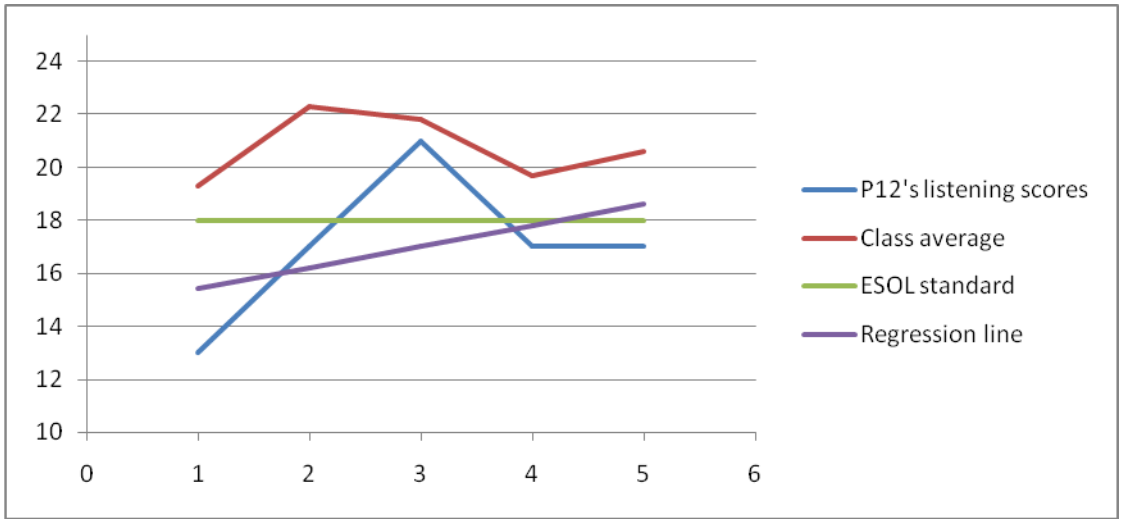
Table 46

Tests	1	2	3	4	5
P12's listening scores	13	17	21	17	17
Class average listening score	19.3	22.3	21.8	19.7	20.6
ESOL standard value	18	18	18	18	18
Regression values	15.4	16.2	17	17.8	18.6

P12's listening scores, class average, ESOL standard and regression values.

In fact, these are the results that this participant scored in the listening tests: 13, 17, 21, 17 and 17. If we transfer these values onto a graph, we observe that the trend is upward.

Graph 22



However, we notice that the score values are below the class average values. Additionally, with the exception of the scores of the third test, the rest of them are all below the minimum values required by Cambridge ESOL to pass the exam. To sum up, of the three reference values only one of them is fulfilled. Apparently, the forecast was not positive about this participant. However, before reaching a definite conclusion, let us look at the other two sets of scores and see how they fit in this picture.

Table 47

P12's reading scores	16	25	42	26	30
Class average reading values	30	29,25	30,7	27	30,4
ESOL standard reading values	27	27	27	27	27
P12's use of English scores	30	22	39	23	33
Class average use of English values	27,4	30,3	30,6	27,7	31,9
ESOL standard use of English values	30	30	30	30	30

P12's reading and use of English scores, class average and ESOL standard values.

To better appreciate how the participant's scores contrast with the reference values, let us represent the difference of these values in the following table.

Table 48

Class average reading value difference	-14	-4.25	11.3	-1	-0.4
ESOL standard reading values difference	-11	-2	15	-1	3
Class average use of English values difference	2.6	-8.3	8.4	-4.7	1.1
ESOL standard use of English values difference	0	-8	9	-7	3

P12's reading and use of English deviayion table.

From the results showing in the table, we observe that the participant's reading scores register figures below the class average and the ESOL standard values, except in the third test, whereas in the case of the use of English value differences the participant's scores do not show a clear tendency: there does not seem to be any significant difference between the participant's scores and the reference values. These results are in line with the prediction since the participant used very few reading strategies and with a low frequency. The use of English test results are also in line with the prediction in that this participant used all the proposed strategies but the frequency rate was not high. If we refer to the Statement of Results (appendix 6P12) we conclude that the predictions were right for the use of English and the listening modes, but were wrong for the reading mode: it was expected that the participant would do regularly in the listening paper and so he did, but not do well in the reading paper. The candidate's exam profile shows just the opposite in the reading paper. This participant obtained the FCE diploma with a final score of 68/100 thanks to a good performance in the writing and speaking papers. What follows is a discussion about the data we have handled so far and considerations about the other components of this study.

7.10.2. Considerations about the first twelve participants.

As we have seen, the criteria used to evaluate how the participants performed on the tests after having used certain strategies selected on the basis of their dominant learning style, have been: in the first place to draw a graph that shows the trend of the scores under scrutiny, either upward or downward; in the second place, to contrast the single participant's test scores against the average test scores of the class; and in the third place, to compare the single participant's scores with the pass marks established by Cambridge ESOL. It was also added that if at least two of the reference values were positive for the participant, the introduction of the language learning strategies could have been considered a successful didactic action.

As was anticipated at the beginning of this study, this scores' assessment method differs from the first study in that the same scores are contrasted in three different ways. Objectively speaking, this method allows the results to be analysed from a wider angle. Having made this premise, the first observation that stands out is that with the exception of the sixth and seventh participants, everybody else met the expectations that were forecasted for them, whether positive or negative. It is appropriate and practical to gather the information which sprang from this section and condense it in a table.

Table 49

Participants	Learning style	Suitable strategies	Prediction	Results
P1	Visual-verbal	Yes	Good	Positive
P2	Visual-verbal	Yes	Good	Positive
P3	Auditory	Yes	Good	Positive
P4	Auditory	Yes	Good	Positive
P5	Visual-verbal	No	Bad	Negative
P6	Visual-verbal	No	Bad	Positive
P7	Auditory	Yes	Good	Negative
P8	Auditory	Yes	Good	Mixed
P9	Auditory	Yes	Good	Positive
P10	Auditory	Yes	Good	Positive
P11	Visual-verbal	Yes	Good	Positive
P12	Auditory	Some	Fair	Mixed

The test results confirmed what was predicted for the majority of these participants on the basis of their strategy choices in relation to their learning styles. The selection and use of those strategies compatible with the dominant learning style has meant scores above the average of the class and also above the pass mark in reference to the official examinations standards. In this group we find participants P1, P2, P.3, P4, P9, P10 and

P11 (in green). On the other hand, those participants who used a reduced number of strategies or no strategy at all scored below the reference values (class average and ESOL standard). In this group we have participants P5, and P12 (in red). Participants 7 and 8 (in blue) used a lot of strategies but did not get the expected results. The only atypical participant is P6 (in black) who, in spite of using very few strategies, obtained marks above the expected figures. In the case of participants eight and twelve, however, even though the results were weak (mixed), the overall performance was positive because they used strategies related to the other skills which compensated the insufficient deployment of strategies in one skill and merited them the Cambridge diploma.

The above observation leads to a finer one. By looking at the scores, we notice that the higher the number of strategies used, the more pronounced the difference between the reference values and the values of the marks obtained by those participants. This can easily be the case with participants four, ten and eleven. In reference to the number of strategies used, something else should be pointed out at this stage. It is not just the use of cognitive strategies that seems to produce good results, it is the orchestration of different types of strategies (direct and indirect: see chapter three) that seems to make the learners successful. Again, in this group we find participants P4, P10, and P11. This finding, however, should not come as a surprise. Other studies, which are cited in the next paragraph, have come up with similar results.

Since the appearance of strategies in the EFL community, quite a few studies have focussed on the relationship between reading strategies and reading proficiency. One such study comes from the hand of Hosenfeld (1976; in Cohen *et al*., 2007: 189). This researcher published findings from a project with 14-year-old learners of French. The purpose of the study was to find out the strategies the learners were using. She found that learners were using strategies on two levels: one for the 'main meaning' and the other at 'word level'. Later (1977) she found that more successful FL readers used primarily 'main meaning' strategies: they kept the meaning in mind; they read in broad phrases; and they either skipped unknown words or inferred their meanings from the surrounding text; while the less successful readers lost track of the main meaning. They read in short phrases, lost the meaning of words, phrases, or sentences soon after they had decoded their meaning. A similar research (Block, 1986; in Cohen *et al*. 2007: 190) found that the more successful readers used more "general" strategies which included

the ability to integrate their understanding from the text with information which they had discerned about the text structure. Another more recent study (Anderson, 1991; in Cohen et al. 2007: 191) concluded that the "better readers used *more* (emphasis in original) but not different strategies than did the less successful readers".

Likewise in the area of listening, research findings (O'Malley *et al.* 1989; in Cohen *et al.* 2007: 169) concluded that the deployment of certain strategies like 'selective attention', 'elaboration', and 'inferencing' together with 'self-monitoring' accounted for better listeners. In Vandergrift's study (2003), it was found that the more successful learners used significantly more 'comprehension monitoring' and metacognitive strategies than the lesser-skilled listeners who appear to have relied more on 'translating' strategies. A similar outcome was found in Hwang (2003) who concluded that more proficient listeners used more 'selective attention', 'prediction' and 'contextualisation' whereas the less proficient listeners misused their application of prior knowledge.

Other studies in reference to the use of strategies in relation to improving learners' skills (and L2 results) will be mentioned at the end of the chapter, but for our purpose these few sources mentioned are sufficient to conclude that the results of this study are in line with other studies as we have just seen above. The following section deals with the data, results and analysis of the second group of participants.

7.10.3. Group 2

This group prepared to sit the Certificate in Advanced English (CAE). The average age of the participants of this group is one year above the FCE group. With the exception of the thirteen year old participant, everyone else already possessed the FCE diploma. The reading strategies proposed to the CAE candidates were the same as the ones proposed to the younger group. The strategies proposed for the use of English were also the same but two extra strategies were added and in the case of the listening strategies, four extra strategies were added (see the chart in appendix 4?). The information relative to each participant will be treated in the same way as was done with the participants in the FCE group. The analysis of the data will proceed in the same way.

Table 49 *Participant 13*

P13's Strategy Choice Chart			
Strategy Nº	Read	UoE	List
1	3	3	3
2	4	4	4
3	4	4	4
4	1	4	4
5	1	1	4
6	4	4	3
7	4	4	4
8	4	4	4
9	2	4	4
10		4	4
11	3	1	4
12	4	4	4
13	1	3	4
14	2	3	4
15	4	4	4
16	2	4	4
17	4	4	4
18	3	3	4
19	3	3	4
20	4	4	4
21	4	3	3
22	4	1	4
23	2	4	3
24		4	4
25		2	4
26		2	1
27		4	4
28		4	4
29		4	3
30		4	4
31		4	3
32		4	
33		4	
34		4	
35		4	
36		3	
Total strategies	22	36	31
Frequency rate	3	3.4	3.7

This participant exhibited an auditory learning style with twenty-two points followed by a tactile-kinaesthetic preference with eighteen points, and the visual-non-verbal style with seventeen points followed by the visual verbal style with sixteen points. The participant showed good interest in the course and seemed to accept with good disposition the employment of the learning strategies. The table beside reports the strategies employed by this participant.

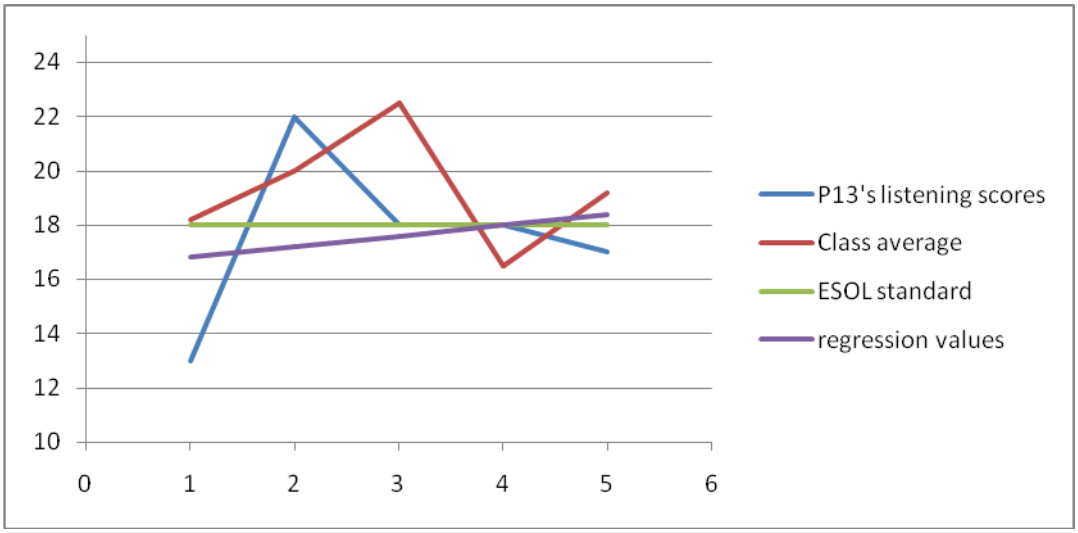
From the data provided by this participant we deduce that he has been very active in the use of the strategies. Even during the course he showed great interest about how these strategies work and how they can help the learner. Having expressed an auditory learning preference, he has used all the strategies proposed to him; additionally, he used them with a high rate of frequency (3.7) very close to the possible maximum value (4). Furthermore, we can observe that this participant also used all the proposed strategies relative to the use of English paper and with a high frequency rate (3.4). The same can be said in relation to the strategies proposed for the reading paper. We can expect positive results in the three papers, but especially in the listening tests. The next step, therefore, is to look at his listening scores which have been collected and registered in the following table together with the class average scores and the ESOL standard value. The table also shows the regression values. However, beside the table we can get a better picture of this participant's evolution if we represent these values on a graph.

Table 50

Tests	1	2	3	4	Final exam
P13's listening scores	13	22	18	18	17
Class average listening scores	18.2	20	22.5	16.5	19.2
ESOL standard value	18	18	18	18	18
Regression values	16.8	17.2	17.6	18	18.4

P13's listening score, class average, ESOL standard and regression value table

Graph 23



From the graph we observe that the evolution of the regression line is positive, but not so the scores in comparison with the class average and the ESOL standard. More particularly, only the values of the tests two and four are better that the class average, while tests one, three and five are below the average. With respect to the ESOL standard value, only test one score is above standard, two coincide with the standard value, and two are below the standard value. With these results, I have to conclude that the performance of this participant is below the expectations. Now, let us examine the results of the other two papers. The following table collects the reading and use of English scores.

Table 51

Tests	1	2	3	4	Final exam
P13's reading scores	39	39	48	40	30
Class average scores	30.6	33.2	37.6	32.6	31.6
ESOL standard value	32	32	32	32	32
P13's use of English scores	41	34	29	35	37
Class average scores	31.9	30.9	33.5	31.2	38.7
ESOL standard value	38	38	38	38	38

P13's reading and use of English scores, class average and ESOL standard values

If we contrast the values above, we obtain the difference between the participant's test scores and the class average scores and the ESOL values. These results are collected in the table below.

Table 52

Reading tests deviations	8.4	5.8	10.4	7.4	-1.6
ESOL reading deviations	7	7	16	8	-2
Use of English tests deviations	9.1	3.1	-4.5	3.8	-1.7
ESOL use of English deviations	3	-4	-9	-3	-1

P13's reading and use of English deviation values.

The table above shows that with the exception of the final exam score, all the reading scores obtained by the participant are way above the two reference values. In the case of the use of English test scores, we see that three values are above the class average, but two are below it. In reference to the ESOL standard value only test one score is positive, while tests two, three, four and five are negative. If we look at this candidate's Statement of Results (See appendix 6 P13), the positions of the results of the reading, use of English and listening papers on the candidate's profile confirm this analysis. In conclusion, this participant did not obtain the results that were forecasted for him in the listening tests. The results cannot be considered bad, but they should have been much better considering the good number of strategies used and the high frequency rate. The results of the reading paper, on the other hand, have been better that expected. While the results of the use of English paper are similar to the results in the listening paper, they should have been much better according to the number and the frequency with which these strategies were used. This candidate did not reach the sufficient mark to obtain the

CAE diploma. He scored 56/100, four per cent less than the minimum required score, with writing and speaking his best marks.

Table 53 *Participant 14*

P14's Strategy Choice Chart			
Strategy Nº	Read	UoE	List
1		3	
2		1	
3		3	
4		2	
5		1	
6		3	
7		4	
8		1	
9		1	4
10		2	4
11		2	4
12		4	4
13		3	3
14		3	
15		3	
16		4	
17		4	
18		2	
19		3	
20		2	
21		2	
22		3	
23		3	
24		2	
25		2	
26		3	
27		1	
28		3	
29		4	
30		4	
31		4	
32		4	
33		3	
34		2	
35		3	

36		2	
Tot. str.		36	5
Frequ. Rate		2.7	3.8

This participant's favourite learning style is also the auditory mode together with the tactile-kanaesthetic mode with sixteen points. In the visual-verbal and the visual-non-verbal modes the participant summed up fourteen points in each mode. This participant showed little interest in the use of strategies in general. In reference to the listening strategies, in fact, he reported using only five strategies. On the other hand, he used all the strategies proposed for the use of English paper, even though the frequency rate only registers 2.7 points. He did not report using any reading strategies. I do not foresee good results in the listening paper for this participant. I can predict some fairly good results in the use of English paper, but I do not expect any good results in the reading paper. In fact, these are the scores obtained by this participant in the listening tests:

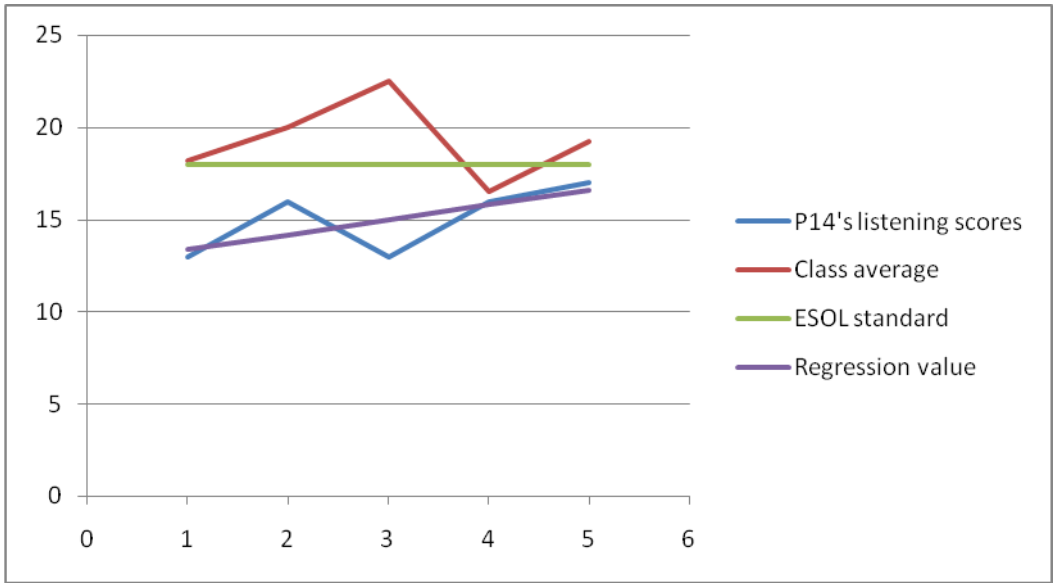
Table 54

P14's listening scores, class average, ESOL standard and regression values.

Tests	1	2	3	4	Final exam
P14's listening scores	13	16	13	16	17
Class average scores	18.2	20	22.5	16.5	19.2
ESOL standard value	18	18	18	18	18
Regression values	13.4	14.2	15	15.8	16.6

At first sight, the listening scores that appear in the table are very low. The highest is the final exam score, but it is lower than the ESOL standard value and the class average score. This low score profile will become even more evident when we transfer these figures onto a graph.

Graph 24



The graph clearly shows the blue line (the participant's listening scores) to be below the green line (ESOL standard pass value) and the red line (the class average value). It is true that the regression line has an upward tendency, which demonstrates that there has been some improvement but not in a sufficient measure. We can say, therefore, that the prediction for this candidate, concerning the listening results, was correct. To complete the full profile of P14, let us analyse the set of results of the other two papers. The table below summarizes the figures relative to the reading and use of English test scores and the reference values.

Table 55

Tests	1	2	3	4	5
P14's eeading scores	29	25	31	27	31
Class average scores	30.6	33.2	37.6	32.6	31.6
ESOL standard value	32	32	32	32	32
P14's use of English scores	35	23	35	29	47
Class average scores	31.9	30.9	33.5	31.2	38.7
ESOL standard value	38	38	38	38	38

P14's reading and use of English scores, class average and ESOL standard values

However, in order to contrast the participant's figures with the reference values, we will focus on the deviation values which are reported in the following table.

Table 56

Reading tests deviations	-1,6	-8,2	-6,6	-5,6	-0,6
ESOL reading deviations	-3	-7	-1	-5	-1
Use of English tests deviations	3,1	-7,9	1,5	-2,2	8,3
ESOL use of English deviations	-3	-15	-3	-9	9

P 14's reading and use of English deviation values

The table shows that the results of the reading test scores, the class average scores and the ESOL standards are all negative. This indicates that this candidate performed poorly with respect to the average performance of the class, and also that he performed below the threshold level required by ESOL to pass the paper. These results were predicted like this at the beginning of the section as the participant did not report using any reading strategies. The use of English deviation values is slightly different. With reference to the class average performance, we can see that three values are positive, but in the case of the ESOL value only one value of the five is positive. This result, however, is the best of the three skills explored, just as it was predicted at the style-strategy stage analysis. Moreover, if we look at the candidate's result profile (see appendix 6 P14) in the Statement of Results, we observe that this candidate passed the final exam and obtained the CAE diploma thanks to the high mark he scored in the use of English and the speaking papers. In the same profile, we can appreciate the low performance in the listening and reading papers.

Table 57 *Participant 15*

P15's Strategy Choice Chart			
Strategy N	Read	UoE	List
1	4		3
2	3		4
3	1		2
4	3		2
5	4		3
6	1		3
7	4		1
8	4		4
9	3		4
10	2		4
11	2		3
12	2		4
13	3		3
14	4		2
15	3		3
16	2		4
17	3		
18	4		
19	1		
20	4		
21	4		
22	1		
23	3		
24			
25			
26			
27			
28			
29			
30			
31			
32			
33			
34			
35			
36			
Total strategies	23		16
Frequency rate	2.8		3.1

This participant's preferred learning way is visual-verbal. He scored twenty points in this modality followed by the auditory and visual-non-verbal learning styles with seventeen points and finally by the tactile-kinaesthetic mode with fifteen points. This participant did not use learning strategies a great deal, as a matter of fact he did not report resorting to any use of English strategies, and he only partly used the listening strategies. He used, however, the whole set of reading strategies, which are the ones that best suit the learning style that was assessed for him. According to the data collected, the number of strategies employed with their rate of frequency (2.8 and 3.1) makes me predict fairly good results in the reading paper, less promising results in the listening paper and negative results in the use of English papers. The table beside shows the reading scores together with the two reference values and the regression figures.

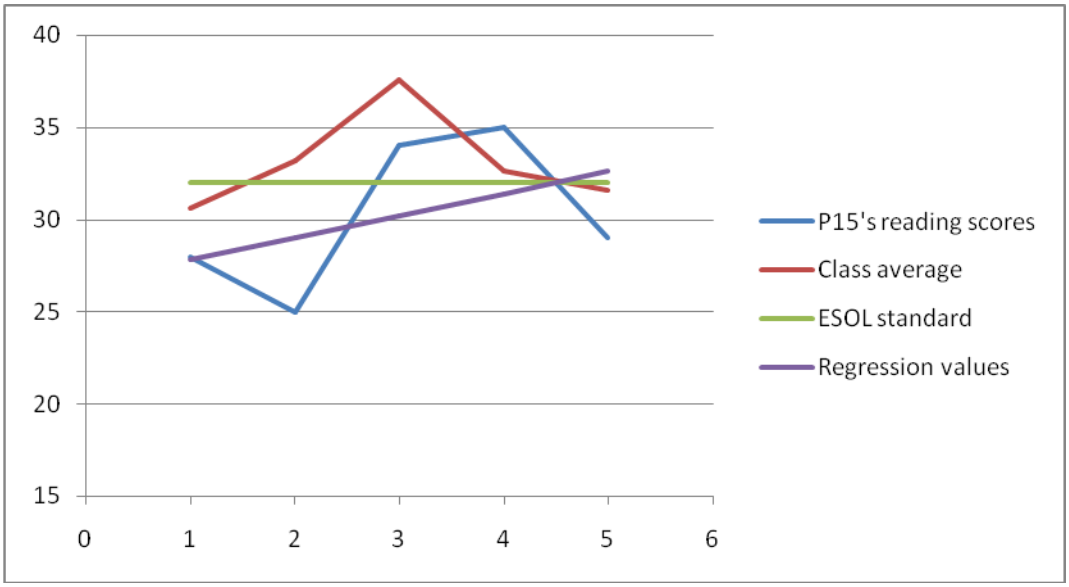
Table 58

Tests	1	2	3	4	Final exam
P15's reading scores	28	25	34	35	29
Class average reading scores	30.6	33.2	37.6	32.6	31.6
ESOL standard value	32	32	32	32	32
Regression values	27.8	29	30.2	31.4	32.6

P15's reading scores, class average, ESOL standard and regression values.

At first sight, we notice that some of the participant's values are below the class average scores and even below the ESOL standard values. However, where we can best judge the evolution of these figures is to see them represented onto a graph.

Graph 25



We see that the blue line (the participant's reading scores) is below the red line (the class average scores) in four tests; only on the fourth test does the blue line overtake the red one. The situation does not change much when we contrast the test marks with the ESOL standard value. Of the five test scores, only two are above the ESOL threshold level. The regression line, on the other hand, shows an upward trend, which is an indication that there has been an improvement, but not enough to conclude that the participant showed clear signs of an increased performance in the reading skills. Apparently, the problem resides in the mark of the final exam, which , having resulted below the ESOL standard and also under the class average value, diverted the positive

evolution of the reading performance of this participant. I have reached a similar conclusion with regard to the outcome of the listening and the use of English tests. The table below synthesises the figures of the scores in question.

Table 59

Tests	1	2	3	4	Final exam
P15's listening scores	14	22	27		16
Class average listening scores	18.2	20	22.5	16.5	19.2
ESOL standard value	18	18	18	18	18
Use of English scores	22	25	30	31	35
Class average use of English scores	31.9	30.9	33.5	31.2	38.7
ESOL standard value	38	38	38	38	38

P15's listening and use of English scores, class average and ESOL standard values

This table leads to the next table that shows the deviation values of the listening and use of English papers.

Table 60

Listening tests deviations	-4,2	2	4,5		-3,2
ESOL listening deviations	-4	4	9		-2
Use of English tests deviations	-9,9	-5,9	-3,5	-0,2	-3,7
ESOL use of English deviations	-16	-13	-8	-7	-3

P15's listening and use of English deviation values

As we can observe from the figures, there is a positive evolution in the listening test scores of this participant. Such positive evolution gets interrupted by the results of the final exam. If the mark had been a few points higher, the trend would have been upward all the way through, and we could have concluded that the use of strategies may have accounted for the improvement of this participant's performance. Unfortunately, we have to conclude that the forecast for this participant was wrong in the reading and the listening papers. Concerning the evolution of the use of English scores - even though this participant did not report employing any of the use of English strategies - the same pattern seems to recur with the results of this paper. It is evident that all the figures are negative, but the negative values decrease more and more with each subsequent test. Again, the problem resides in the final exam results. Had the last score been higher, we could have concluded that this participant's evolution in the use of English test score would have been positive. All these considerations find a confirmation in the candidate's profile of the statement of results (see appendix 6 P15). The reading and listening marks are in the "Weak" band and the use of English mark is just above the "Weak" band. This candidate obtained 55/100 as a final mark, not enough to get the

CAE diploma, with 60% being the minimum required to get the title. This candidate received the best mark in the writing paper with 82%, followed by the speaking paper with 72%.

Table 61 *Participant 16*

P16's Strategy Choice Chart			
Strategy Nº	Read	UoE	List
1		3	3
2		4	4
3		3	3
4		3	4
5		3	3
6		4	3
7		3	4
8		4	3
9		4	4
10		4	3
11		3	4
12		4	4
13		2	4
14		3	3
15		4	4
16		3	3
17		4	
18		4	
19		3	
20		3	
21		3	
22		3	
23		4	
24		3	
25		2	4
26		2	4
27		3	3
28			3
29		4	4
30		4	2
31		4	
32		4	
33		3	
34		3	
35		3	
36		3	

Total strategies		35	22
Frequency Rate		3.3	3

This participant scored eighteen points in the visual-non-verbal, auditory and tactile-kanaesthetic learning styles, and seventeen points in the visual-verbal learning mode. The characteristic that needs to be highlighted about this participant is his age. He was the youngest of the twelve and was only thirteen years of age when he entered the course. His parents wanted him to do this course because they felt that the regular English course was too easy for him, since the boy had been sent to study in a boarding school for one and a half academic years in England the previous years. I felt that the contents of the texts that the CAE course dealt with were a bit too advanced for him. Notwithstanding my recommendation to place him in an FCE course, his parents insisted on having their son on this course no matter what the result would be. Incidentally, the speaking ability of this candidate was magnificent.

Regarding the use of strategies, he made a big effort in trying to deploy them even though at times he felt they were more of a hindrance than a help. In fact, as we will see in the Strategy Choice Table, he did not report using any of the reading strategies. This candidate used mainly listening and use of English strategies.

According to the data collected and reported in the designated table, this participant should do well in the listening tests as he used a rather high number of listening strategies and with a high frequency rate. He also used practically all the use of English strategies and with a high frequency rate as well. Consequently, he should also get good results in the use of English tests, while I do not expect high scores in the reading paper. The table that follows shows the listening marks together with the class average, the ESOL standard, and the regression trend values.

Table 62

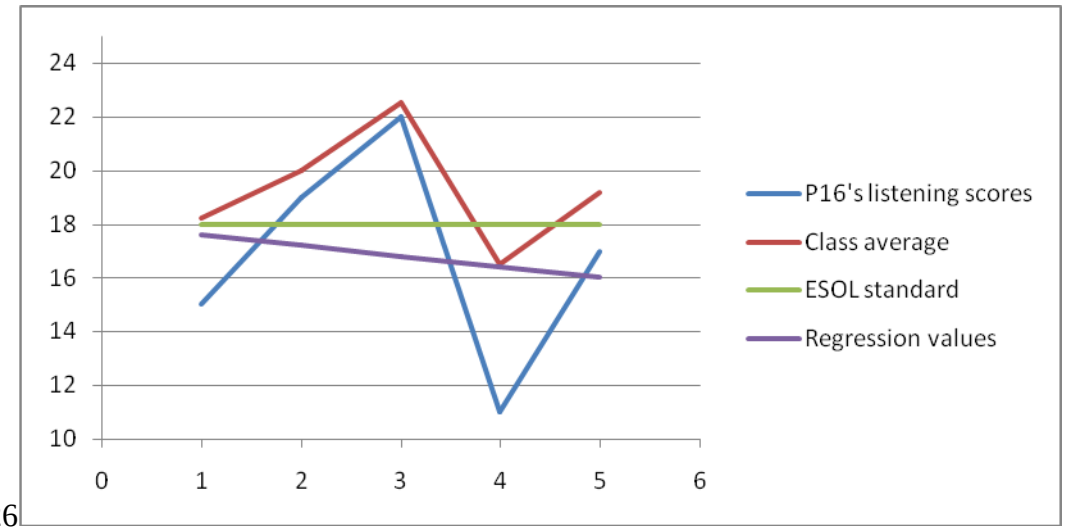
Tests	1	2	3	4	Final exam
P16's listening scores	15	19	22	11	17
Class average scores	18,2	20	22,5	16,5	19,2
ESOL standard value	18	18	18	18	18
Regression values	17,6	17,2	16,8	16,4	16

P16's listening scores, class average, ESOL standard and regression values

At first sight we detect that the participant's value are all below the class average scores and some are also below the ESOL standard value. The regression values are also decreasing, which indicate that the line has a downward trend. The figures of the table

transferred onto a graph will give us a visual reference of this participant's performance in the listening tests.

Graph



26

The graph clearly shows the position of the blue line (P16's listening scores) under the red line (the class average scores). With respect to the green line (ESOL value), we can see the participant's results better the ESOL standard only in tests two, three and five. Finally, with respect to the regression line, we observe that the tendency is downward. I have to conclude, therefore, that the prediction I advanced for this candidate was wrong. In order to complete the analysis of the results in the other two papers, let us look at how the participant performed in the reading and use of English tests. The table below shows the corresponding figures for these two papers.

Table 63

Tests	1	2	3	4	Final exam
P16's reading scores	28	40		18	28
Class average reading scores	30.6	33.2	37.6	32.6	31.6
ESOL standard value	32	32	32	32	32
P16's use of English scores	22	22	32	28	34
Class average use of English scores	31.9	30.9	33.5	31.2	38.7
ESOL standard value	38	38	38	38	38

P16's reading and use of English scores, class average and ESOL standard values

From the figures we see that the participant's scores are below the class average scores, except in test two, and below the ESOL standard value. The mark for test three does not appear because the candidate was absent on the day of the exam. The marks for the use

of English tests are also below the two reference values. The deviation table below shows the extent to which the participant's scores are far from the two reference values.

Table 64

Reading test deviations	-2.6	6.8		-14.6	-3.6
ESOL reading deviations	-4	8		-14	-4
Use of English tests deviations	-9.9	-8.9	-1.5	-3.2	-4.7
ESOL use of English deviations	-16	-16	-6	-10	-4

P16's reading and use of English deviation values

The deviation values in the table are a clear indication that the performance of this candidate in the reading and the Use of English papers has been poor and that the marks he obtained are far away from the values employed to measure the candidate's performance. In conclusion, having used the strategies in the listening and use of English papers did not do much good to this candidate as he scored such low marks. These outcomes are confirmed by the Statement of Results issued by Cambridge ESOL where we can see that the position of the reading and Use of English results are below the "Weak" line. The listening paper outcome is above the "Weak" line but below the "Borderline" which means that the score is still low. We have to conclude, therefore, that the prediction for the listening paper was wrong. Moreover, the prediction for the use of English paper was also wrong; only the forecast for the reading paper was right. This candidate scored forty-nine per cent (49/100) in the overall final exam. He did exceptionally well in the speaking paper and reached "Borderline" in the writing paper, but failed the afore-mentioned remaining papers (see appendix 6 P16).

Table 61 *Participant 17*

P17's Strategy Choice Chart			
Strategy Nº	Read	UoE.	List.
1	2	2	2
2	4	3	4
3	3	2	3
4	3		3
5		3	3
6		4	3
7		4	3
8		4	3
9		4	3
10		2	2

11		3	3
12		4	4
13		2	3
14		2	2
15		4	3
16		4	4
17	4	3	4
18		2	
19		3	
20		2	
21		3	
22		1	
23		4	
24		3	
25		2	
26		2	1
27		3	4
28		3	2
29		4	3
30		4	4
31		4	2
32		3	
33		4	
34		3	
35		3	
36		3	
Tot. str.	5	35	23
Frequ. Rate	3.2	3.0	3.0

This participant showed preference for the auditory learning style as well, with twenty-one points, followed by the visual-non-verbal and the tactile-kinaesthetic with twenty points, and finally by the visual-verbal with sixteen points. He was a steady attendant to the lessons and participated actively in the class dynamics. This candidate showed good interest in the learning strategies and often enquired about the use of strategies for the writing and speaking papers. The following table shows the participant's choice and use of the strategies in the three modalities: reading, use of English and listening papers.

From the table we see that the participant used very few reading strategies but a great number of use of English strategies. As far as the strategies related to the participant's preferred learning style, we can say that he used a good number of listening strategies and with a good frequency rate. He also used practically the whole of the proposed strategies for the use of English paper. Based on this numerical information, I can foretell positive results in the listening paper and the use of English paper, but not good results in the reading paper.

Drawing information from the results table, the scores for this participant are the following:

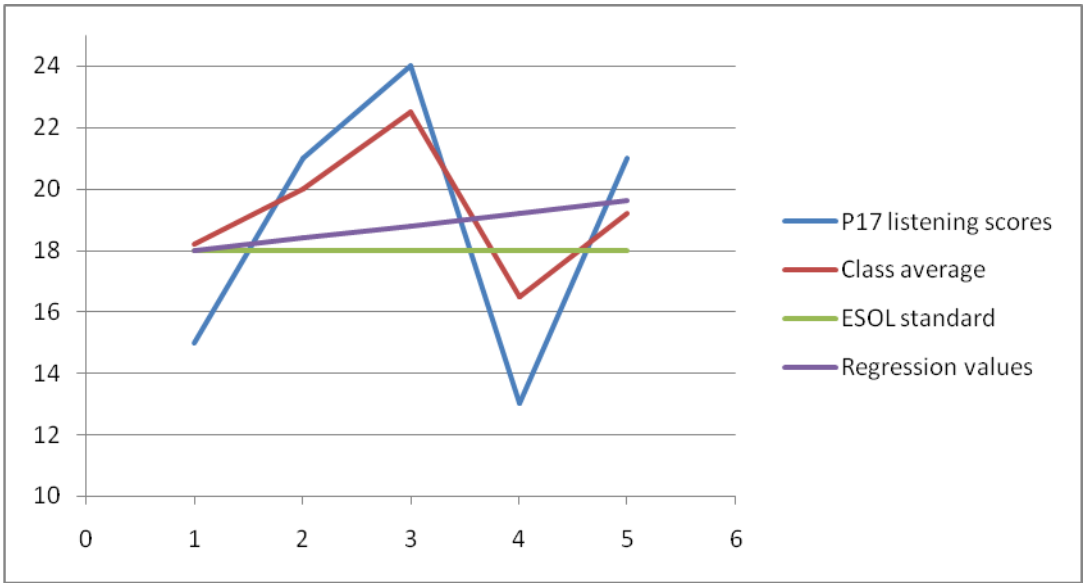
Table 66

Tests	1	2	3	4	Final exam
P17's listening scores	15	21	24	13	21
Class average scores	18.2	20	22.5	16.5	19.2
ESOL standard value	18	18	18	18	18
Regression values	18	18.4	18.8	19.2	19.6

P17's listening scores, class average, ESOL standard and regression values

From the figures in the table, we can see that although not all the scores are superior to the class average and the ESOL standard, the majority of them are. The regression values point upward as well. The next step is to show these figures on a graph.

Graph 27



The indication of the graph tells us that three out of five values are superior to the reference values. Only tests one and four are inferior to the reference values. The regression line shows an upward trend as well. I can conclude, therefore, that what I foretold for this candidate was right. Referring to the results of the other two papers, their values are shown in the following table:

Table 67

Tests	1	2	3	4	Final exam
P 17's reading scores	31	35		26	30
Class average reading scores	30,6	33,2	37,6	32,6	31,6
ESOL standard reading value	32	32	32	32	32
P 17's use of English scores	27	27	29	27	34
Class average use of English scores	31,9	30,9	33,5	31,2	38,7
ESOL standard use of English value	38	38	38	38	38

P17's reading and use of English scores, class average and ESOL standard values

As we can see, the reading score for test three is missing. The participant did not come to class the day of the test. The other scores do not seem to be better than the reference values. Looking at the use of English scores, we notice that the participant's scores are way below the reference values. However, to better appreciate the contrastive values of these figures, their deviation values are shown in the table below:

Table 68

Reading test deviations	0.4	1.8		-6.6	-1.6
ESOL reading deviations	-1	3		-6	-2
Use of English test deviations	-4.9	-2.1	-4.5	-4.2	-4.7
ESOL use of English deviations	-11	-11	-9	-11	-4

P17's reading and use of English deviation values

The negative values that resulted from contrasting the reading scores with the reference values indicate that the participant's performance was poor in the reading tests. Such results are in line with the prediction that was made for this candidate. Concerning the deviation values resulting from the contrast of the use of English tests with the reference values, we can see they are clearly negative which indicate a rather poor performance of the participant in this test series, which is contrary to what was forecasted at the beginning of this section. The candidate's profile in the Statement of Results (see appendix 6 P17) confirms the prediction that was advanced for the listening paper. The position of the listening mark is close to the "Good" line and is the best score obtained by this participant in the final exam. It also confirms the low mark (just above the "Weak" line but quite below the "Borderline") in the reading paper, as was foreseen. Where the prediction was wrong was with the use of English paper test performance. We predicted good results according to the number and frequency of use of these strategies, but the result ended up being below the "Weak" line. If this candidate had done as well as he was expected to in this paper, he would have got the five extra points necessary to get him the CAE diploma. His final score was fifty-five percent (55/100).

Candidate 18

This participant showed preference for the auditory and the tactile-kinaesthetic learning channels with eighteen points, followed by the visual-non-verbal sensory channel with sixteen points, and the last learning preference, the visual-verbal, with eleven points. Here is another case of a Spanish native speaker that prefers the auditory sensory

perception. This candidate also spent every summer in a summer camp in an English speaking country since the age of eleven. We can say that his speaking skills in the target language are close to native. Concerning the use of the learning strategy, at first he was not interested in them but halfway through the course he developed a certain interest. He did not report using any reading strategies, but he used a fair number of listening strategies, which are the ones that suit his favourite learning style, and he also used all the use of English strategies. In reference to the listening strategies, he used them *often* or *always*, whereas, the use of English strategies were mostly used *sometimes* or *hardly ever*. The table beside reports this information.

Table 69

P18's Strategy Choice Chart			
Strategy Nº	Read	UoE	List
1		2	2
2		2	3
3		2	3
4		2	3
5		3	3
6		4	3
7		4	4
8		3	3
9		2	3
10		1	4
11		3	3
12		4	3
13		3	4
14		3	3
15		2	3
16		4	4
17		4	3
18		2	
19		2	
20		2	
21		3	
22		2	
23		3	
24		3	
25		2	
26		3	
27		2	
28		2	
29		3	
30		2	
31		2	
32		3	
33		1	
34		2	
35		3	
36		3	
Total strategies		36	17
Frequency rate		2.6	3.2

This participant used a bit more than half of the listening strategies proposed, but he used them with a fairly high frequency (3.2). Based on this information and on the result of the learning style inventory, I can forecast positive outcomes in the listening test scores for this participant. The same prediction can be made for the use of English test scores although the scores may be lower compared with the listening scores. Regarding the reading scores, I foresee low scores across the five tests.

The table below shows the information relative to the listening test scores, the class average scores, the ESOL standard value, and the regression value.

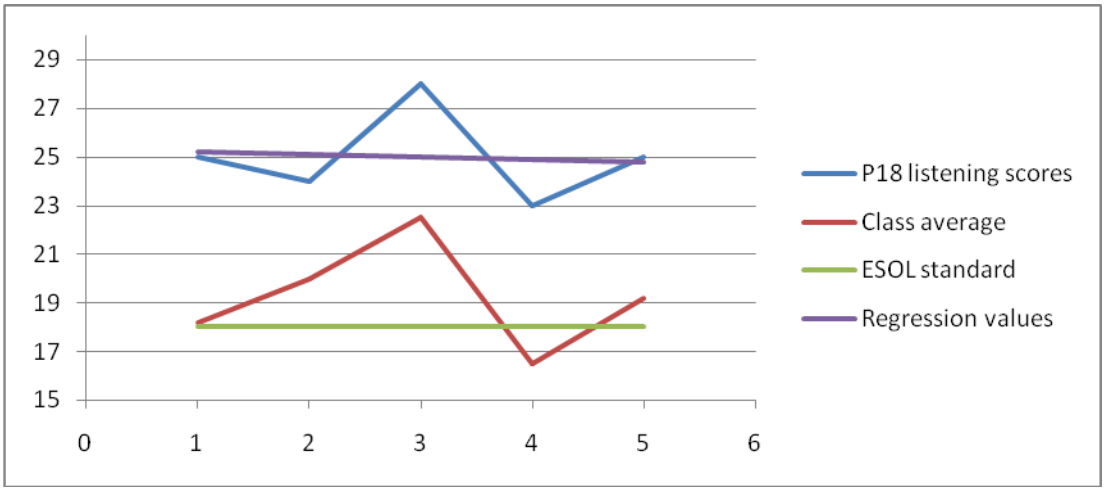
Table 70

Tests	1	2	3	4	Final exam
P18's listening scores	25	24	28	23	25
Class average scores	18.2	20	22.5	16.5	19.2
ESOL standard value	18	18	18	18	18
Regression values	25.2	25.1	25	24.9	24.8

P18's listening scores, class average, ESOL standard and regression values

At a glance, we can see that this participant's values are quite high. For example, in test three he obtained twenty-eight, which is close to the maximum score possible. The other marks are also high and well above the class average and the ESOL standard. These figures on a graph will give us a better idea of the participant's performance in the listening tests.

Graph 28



As we can see, the blue line (P18's scores) is at quite a distance from the red (class average) and green (ESOL standard) lines. The regression line is tipping slightly downward, but it cannot be denied that the participant's performance has been outstanding in this series of tests. Consequently, it can be stated that the prediction was right for the outcome of this paper. Concerning the other two papers, I will show the results in the table that appears under this line.

Table 71

Tests	1	2	3	4	Final exam
Reading scores	30	31		26	33
Class average reading scores	30.6	33.2	37.6	32.6	316

ESOL standard reading value	32	32	32	32	32
Use of English scores	37	36	38	29	39
Class average use of English scores	31.9	30.9	33.5	31.2	38.7
ESOL standard value	38	38	38	38	38

P18's reading and use of English scores, class average and ESOL standard values

The score for test three in the reading paper is missing because the candidate was absent that day. The other reading scores do not appear to be superior to the average or the standard value. The use of English scores, on the other hand, appear to be much better positioned with respect to the reference values, especially with respect to the class average figures. The next table shows the deviation results of these figures.

Table 72

Reading test deviations	-0.6	-2.2		-6.6	1.4
ESOL reading deviations	-2	-1		-6	1
Use of English test deviations	5.1	5.1	4.5	-2.2	0.3
ESOL use of English deviations	-1	-2	0	-9	1

P18's reading and use of English deviation values

From the table, we see that the balance between the participant's scores and the reference values is negative for the participant. All the figures, except for two, are in red. The same cannot be said in the case of the use of English contrastive figures. The green results, namely the positive signs, outnumber the red ones. Even concerning these two papers, therefore, the predictions were correct. If we look at the candidate profile in his Statement of Results (appendix 6 P18) we find a confirmation of what has been concluded so far. The highest mark corresponds to the listening paper (the mark is positioned in the "Exceptional" band), the use of English and the reading marks are above the "Borderline" and appear on the same line. What I find surprising is the mark in the speaking paper which is just above the "Borderline". This candidate showed great speaking skills; he should have obtained a much higher mark. The candidate, however, achieved his objective which was to obtain the CAE diploma with a 65/100 overall pass mark.

Candidate 19

This participant's preferred learning style is visual-non-verbal with nineteen points. This preference is followed by the auditory sensory mode with sixteen points and the visual-verbal channel with fifteen points. In the last place we find the tactile-kinaesthetic perceptual learning mode with thirteen points. Even in this case we will not

be able to consider the first learning style preference (the visual-non-verbal), and we have to skip to the next preferred learning mode which is the auditory channel.

Regarding the use of learning strategies, this participant was keen on using them and considered them a valuable help for a learner of a foreign language; however, he only reported using reading and listening strategies. The frequency with which he used the

Table 73

P19's Strategy Choice Chart			
Strategy Nº	Read	UoE	List
1	1		
2	4		3
3	2		3
4	1		4
5	3		2
6	3		3
7	3		3
8	4		1
9	1		4
10	3		3
11	4		3
12	3		3
13	3		4
14	1		4
15	4		4
16	1		4
17	3		4
18	4		4
19	2		4
20	3		3
21	2		3
22	4		
23	3		
24			
25			1
26			4
27			4
28			3
29			1
30			4
31			
32			
33			

34			
35			
36			
Total strategies	23		26
Frequency rate	2.7		3.2

reading strategies tends to be more on the *Often* and *Always* side than on the *Hardly ever* and *Sometimes* side. In the case of the listening strategies, most of the strategies fall on the *Often* and *Always* bands. The table below summarises this information.

As we can see, this participant used almost all the proposed listening strategies and with a high frequency, many of which were with the highest frequency possible. In fact, the frequency rate (3.2) is rather high. Basing my judgement on these figures, I can predict fairly good results in the listening papers. As far as the reading outcomes are concerned, I can only foresee fair results. In the case of the use of English scores, I do not think they will be positive.

First, I will analyse the listening test scores which are shown in the table below and contrasted with the two usual reference values.

Table 74

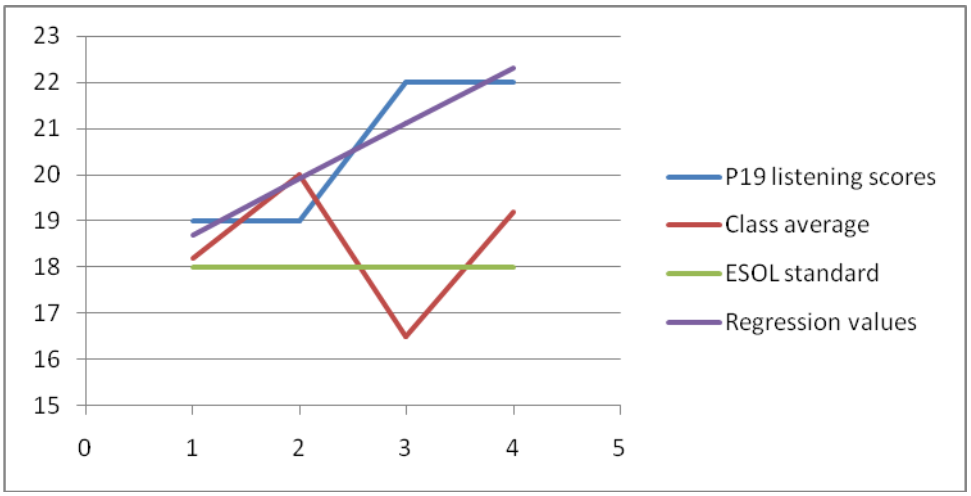
Tests	1	2	3	4	Final exam
P19's listening scores	19	19		22	22

Class average scores	18,2	20	22,5	16,5	19,2
ESOL standard value	18	18	18	18	18
Regression values	18,7	19,9		21,1	22,3

P19's listening scores, class average, ESOL standard and regression values

From the table, we see that the score for test three is missing. The participant was absent on the day of that test. The other participant's scores seem to be superior to the reference values. These values transferred onto a graph will illustrate visually the contrast between the participant scores and the reference values.

Graph 29



The graph reports tests one to four. Test three is missing. The excel sheet would not leave a space between tests two and four, so that test three is in reality test four and test four corresponds to the value of test five. The graph shows us that, with one exception, all the values of the blue line are superior to the values of the red line, and the position of the blue line is also superior to the position of the green line. Furthermore, the regression line shows a clear upward trend. I can conclude, therefore, that the prediction that I had made for this participant and series of tests was correct. Apparently, the use of the appropriate strategies brought about a significant improvement in the listening skills of this learner.

At this point I will analyse the reading and use of English test results. Shifting our attention to the other two papers, the next table shows us the participant's scores and their reference values.

Table 75

Tests	1	2	3	4	Final exam

Reading scores	33	41	43	43	31
Class average reading scores	30.6	33.2	37.6	32.6	31.6
ESOL standard reading value	32	32	32	32	32
Use of English scores	29	32	35	26	36
Class average use of English scores	31.9	30.9	33.5	31.2	38.7
ESOL standard value	38	38	38	38	38

P19's reading and use of English scores, class average and ESOL standard values

At a glance, we see that the participant's reading scores are better than the class average scores, and are also superior to the ESOL values, except in the final exam score. The next table shows the deviation values resulting from the contrast between the participant's scores and the reference values.

Table 76

Reading test deviations	2.4	7.8	5.4	10.4	-0.6
ESOL reading deviations	1	9	11	11	-1
Use of English test deviations	-2.9	1.1	1.5	-5.2	-2.7
ESOL use of English deviations	-9	-6	-3	-12	-2

P19's reading and use of English deviation values

The positive sign appearing in the deviation table demonstrates that the participant's reading scores are better compared to the reference value, except in the final test. In the case of the use of English deviation values the predominant sign is red which indicates that the participant's performance in the use of English paper tests is below the reference values. These results were foreseen in the style-strategy phase and are confirmed by the results obtained in the final exam. In fact, the Statement of Results (appendix 6 P19) shows the position of the marks of the five papers in the candidate's profile spectrum. The best mark is the listening mark, approaching the "Good" line. The next best mark is in the speaking paper which appears above the "Borderline". Next, is the reading mark, which appears just below the "Borderline" but approaching the pass mark. Finally, we find the writing mark which is between the "Borderline" and the "Weak" line, followed by the use of English mark which is just above the "Weak" line. The candidate reached the minimum pass average (60%) and obtained the CAE diploma.

Participant 20

This participant exhibited an auditory sensory preference with eighteen points followed by the tactile-kinaesthetic sensory channel. He also scored fifteen points in the visual-

Strategy Nº	Read	UoE	List
1		3	
2	4	3	4
3	4	1	4
4	4	3	4
5	1	2	3
6	4	4	2
7	3	4	2
8	4	4	4
9	4	4	4
10	4	4	4
11	4	3	4
12	3	4	4
13	4	4	4
14	4	4	4
15	4	4	4
16	4	4	4
17	4	4	4
18	3	4	4
19	4	3	4
20	4	3	4
21	4	2	4
22	4	1	4
23	3	4	4
24		4	4
25		3	4
26		2	4
27		1	1
28		4	4
29		4	4
30		4	4
31		4	4
32		4	
33		4	
34		4	
35		4	
36		2	
Total strategies	22	36	30
Frequency rate	3.7	3.3	3.7

verbal style and finally, he obtained thirteen points in the visual-non-verbal style. This participant demonstrated great interest in learning English as a foreign language. For economic reasons his family had not been able to send him abroad to learn English on a proper course. Only once he spent three weeks in a summer camp. For this reason, he was not proficient at spoken English. Concerning the use of learning strategies, he was a bit suspicious at first. He did not think they were useful at all. Then, after a period of encouragement, he started to use them and with good results. The table beside shows the strategies used by this participant.

As far as we can see from the figures in the table, this participant used the learning strategies a great deal. He practically used them all and with a high frequency. The frequency rate of 3.7 is quite unusual for any participant in this study. This participant obtained this result in the reading and listening papers. Consequently, my expectations are very high for this participant. Basing my judgement on these figures, I can only anticipate excellent results in the three papers.

Firstly, I will analyse the paper that correspond to his favourite learning style which is the listening paper. The table that appears below reports the reference value for this paper as well.

Table 77

Table 78

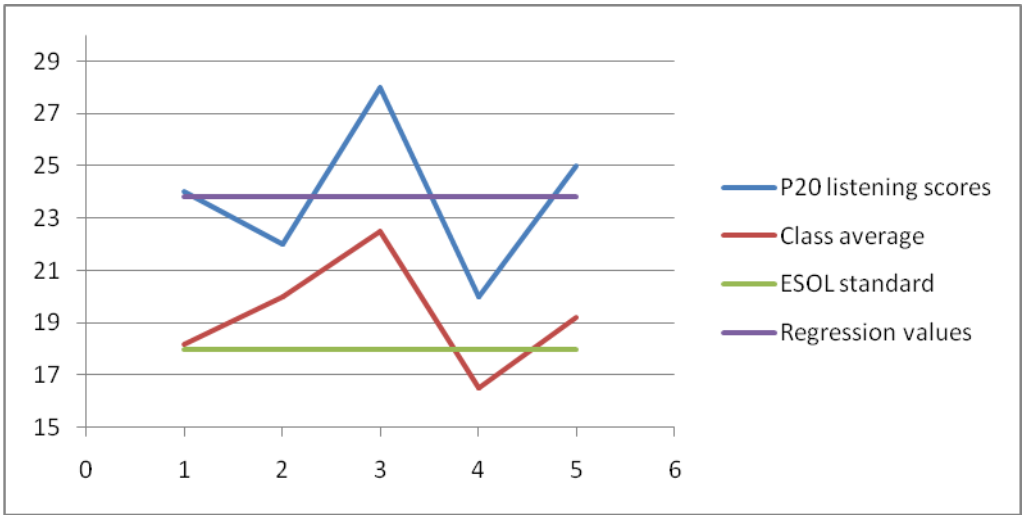
Tests	1	2	3	4	Final exam
P20's listening scores	24	22	28	20	25

Class average scores	18.2	20	22.5	16.5	19.2
ESOL standard value	18	18	18	18	18
Regression values	23.8	23.8	23.8	23.8	23.8

P20's listening scores, class average, ESOL standard and regression values

The first impression is that all the participant's values are superior to the class average results and to the ESOL standard value. The regression values do not vary. This may indicate that there has not been any improvement, but if we look at the figures we see that they fluctuate, especially between the third and the fourth exam with twenty-eight and twenty points respectively. On the other hand, we can see an improvement if we focus on the first and the last scores which are twenty-four and twenty-five respectively. Notwithstanding, these figures are more self explanatory when represented on a graph. The following graph shows the relationship between the participant's scores and the reference values.

Graph 30



The graph shows the wide distance existing between this learner's scores and the reference values. We can also see that test five score is superior to test one score, which indicates a slight improvement, in spite of the fact that the regression line does not show an upward trend. These results demonstrate that the expectations generated by this participant with his steady use of strategies were met.

Secondly, I will analyse the results he obtained in the other two papers and compare them with the two reference values. The next table shows the corresponding figures.

Table 79

Tests	1	2	3	4	Final exam
P20's reading scores	35	37	45	50	48
Class average reading scores	30.6	33.2	37.6	32.6	31.6
ESOL standard value	32	32	32	32	32
P20's use of English scores	45	47	48	55	53
Class average use of English scores	31.9	30.9	33.5	31.2	38.7
ESOL standard value	38	38	38	38	38

P20's reading and use of English scores, class average and ESOL standard values

At a glance, we can see the participant's scores overtake the two sets of the reference values. We can also observe that the participant's scores increase steadily with the test numbers. Another observation is that there is a wide gap between the participant's scores and the reference values. For example, in test four of the reading paper, there are eighteen points difference between the two figures. The same happens in the use of English paper: there are seventeen points of difference between the two numbers. However, where we can best appreciate the differences is in the next table which shows the deviation values.

Table 80

Reading test deviations	4.4	3.8	7.4	17.4	16.4
ESOL reading deviations	3	5	13	18	16
Use of English test deviations	13.1	16.1	14.5	23.8	14.3
ESOL use of English deviations	7	9	10	17	15

P20's reading and use of English deviation values

The deviation value table shows clear evidence of the progress achieved by this participant. Not only do the figures carry a positive sign, but there is a noticeable increase from one number to the next. I would say that the difference, in terms of deviation, is much bigger in the use of English and reading tests, than in the listening tests. With these results, the obvious consideration is that this participant's performance lived up to the expectations that he generated in the style-strategy stage. In fact, if we look at his profile in the Statement of Results (appendix 6 P20), we see that the positions of his scores are all above the "Exceptional" line (with the exception of the speaking mark). The participant passed the final exam and obtained the CAE diploma with an A.

Table 81 *Participant 21*

P21's Strategy Choice Chart

Strategy Nº	Read	UoE	List
1	4	2	
2	3	4	
3	2	4	
4	1	3	
5	3	3	
6	3	2	
7	4	4	
8	4	4	
9	3	4	
10	4	3	
11	4	3	
12	4	4	
13	3	3	
14	4	3	
15	4	4	
16	4	4	
17	4	3	
18	4	3	
19	3	2	
20	3	4	
21	4	4	
22	4	2	
23	4	3	
24		3	
25		3	
26		4	
27		3	
28		4	
29		4	
30		4	
31		4	
32		2	
33		2	
34		3	
35		3	
36		2	
Total strategies	23	36	
Frequency Rate	3,5	3,2	

This participant summed up twenty points in the tactile-kinaesthetic learning style. His next preferred styles are the auditory and the visual-non-verbal with nineteen points, and finally, his least preferred style is the visual-verbal with sixteen points. Concerning the use of learning strategies he found them useful, but he did not seem enthusiastic about using them when I proposed their deployment during the execution of the tests. In fact, he only reported using reading and use of English strategies and did not seem to be interested in the listening strategies, which could have boosted his listening test scores, especially knowing that the auditory is his next preferred sensory channel. This participant used all the proposed reading strategies with a good frequency and he employed the whole of the use of English strategies with a high frequency as well. This information was collected and is shown in the next table.

From the information contained in the table we observe that this participant used a great deal of reading and use of English strategies. Not only that, but he used them with a high frequency. The frequency rate (3.5) that appears for the reading strategies is unusually high, and even the frequency (3.2) for the use of English strategies is a fairly high rate. This participant, however, did not report using any listening strategies. Consequently what I can predict is poor results in the execution of the listening tests and good results for the reading and use of English paper tests.

The first paper tests to analyse are the listening scores. These have been collected and presented in the table below.

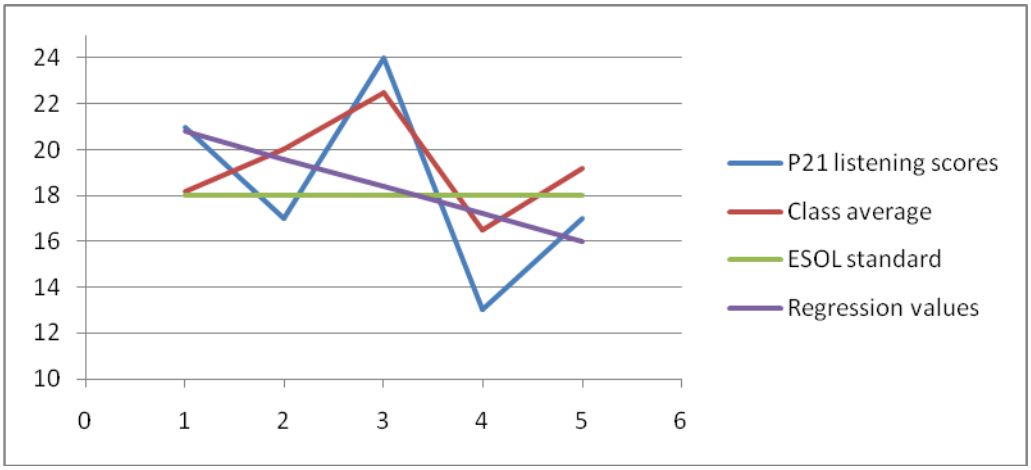
Table 82

Tests	1	2	3	4	Final exam
P21's listening scores	21	17	24	13	17
Class average scores	18,2	20	22,5	16,5	19,2
ESOL standard value	18	18	18	18	18
Regression values	20,8	19,6	18,4	17,2	16

P21's listening scores, class average, ESOL standard and regression values

However, once these figures are transferred onto a graph they offer a visual profile that allows us to better appreciate the relationship between these scores and the values that serve as reference, as I have done with the previous participants.

Graph 31



The blue line draws an erratic movement of ups and downs like a roller coaster. Only two scores are above the class average and the ESOL standard. The other three are noticeably below these reference values. Additionally, the regression line is clearly on a decreasing trend. This scenario coincides with the prediction that was made for this participant and for the listening paper. The analysis continues to group the scores of the other two test sets: the reading and the use of English papers.

Table 82

Tests	1	2	3	4	Final exam
P21's Reading scores	29	33	35	32	29
Class average reading scores	30.6	33.2	37.6	32.6	31.6
ESOL standard reading value	32	32	32	32	32
P21's Use of English scores	37	34	28	30	36
Class average use of English scores	31.9	30.9	33.5	31.2	38.7
ESOL standard use of English value	38	38	38	38	38

P21's reading and use of English scores, class average and ESOL standard values

At first sight we can observe that the participant's scores only rarely reach the reference figures. The tendency is clearly negative. In fact, if we contrast the participant's figures with the reference values we get the results as shown in the table below.

Table 83

Reading test deviations	-1,6	-0,2	-2,6	-0,6	-2,6
ESOL reading deviations	-3	1	3	0	-3
Use of English test deviations	5,1	3,1	-5,5	-1,2	-2,7
ESOL use of English deviations	-1	-4	-10	-8	-2

P21's reading and use of English deviation values

These outcomes are a clear indication that this participant's performance has been poor. Moreover, in spite of the extensive use of learning strategies in the reading and use of English papers, I did not see the expected results. I have to conclude, therefore, that the prediction made for the listening paper was right, but the predictions were wrong in the case of the reading and the use of English papers. As for the Statement of Results, the marks in his profile are found between the "Weak" and "Borderline" band which confirm this conclusion. The least positive score is in the reading paper which is found below the "Weak" line. The candidate's best mark was in the speaking paper with about 70% correct answers. This candidate did not get the CAE diploma as he got only 54% of average score across the five papers (the minimum required is 60% across the five papers).

Participant 22

This participant shared his learning preference between the visual-verbal and the visual-non-verbal learning styles with twenty points. Next, he obtained nineteen points in the auditory sensory perception, and finally, he got sixteen points in the tactile-kinaesthetic learning mode. For the purpose of this study, we will consider the visual-verbal learning style and we will mainly focus on the reading strategies even though the listening and use of English strategies will also be taken into consideration.

This participant did not show great interest in the use of strategies. As a matter of fact, he only used a reduced number of reading strategies and few listening strategies. On the other hand, he did employ a greater number of use of English learning strategies. The table below collects this participant's strategies, showing the frequency of use as well.

Table 84

P22's Strategy Choice Chart			
Strategy Nº	Read	UoE.	List.
1	4	4	
2	2	4	
3	3	2	
4	2	3	
5		3	
6		3	
7		4	
8		4	
9	4	3	4
10		3	3
11		4	3
12		4	4
13		3	
14		3	4
15			4
16		4	2
17			4
18		4	
19		3	
20			
21		2	
22		1	
23			
24		3	
25		3	
26		1	
27			
28			
29			
30			
31			
32			
33			
34			
35			
36			
Total strategies	5	22	8
Frequency rate	3,0	3,1	3,5

As we can see, even though the frequency rate is high, this loses efficacy due to the insufficient number of strategies used. This refers to the reading and listening strategies for the main part. I do not expect good scores in the tests of these two papers. Concerning the use of English learning strategies, we can expect a few good scores judging from the number of strategies employed and their frequency rate. First, I will focus the analysis on the reading paper scores which are contrasted against the two reference values that I have been using so far. The next table reports this information.

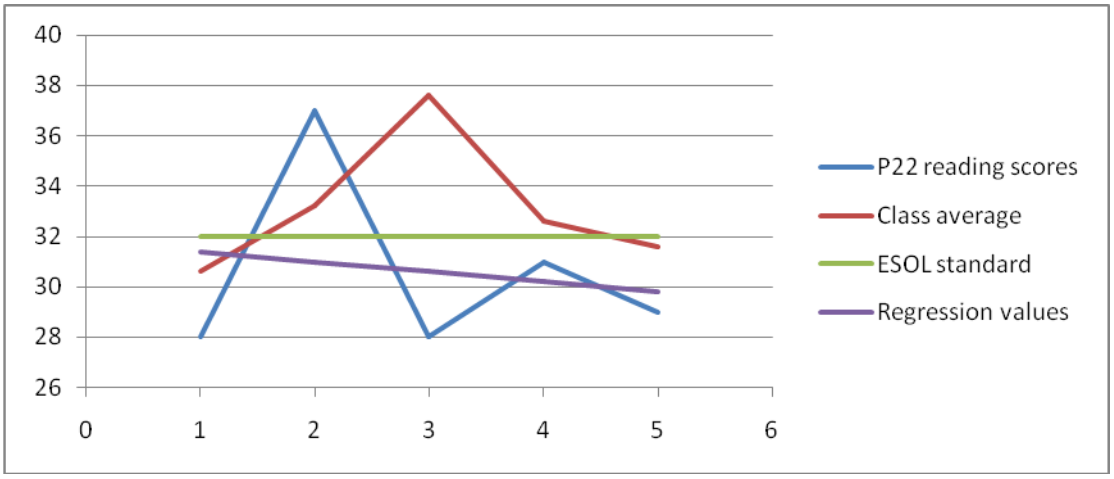
Table 85

Tests	1	2	3	4	Final exam
P22's reading scores	28	37	28	31	29
Class average reading scores	30.6	33.2	37.6	32.6	31.6
ESOL standard value	32	32	32	32	32
Regression values	31.4	31	30.6	30.2	29.8

P22's reading scores, class average, ESOL standard and regression values

At first sight, we see that, with one exception, all the participant's score values are inferior to the class average score values and to the ESOL standard values. On top of that, we notice that the regression values are in a descending order. These figures on a graph will give us a visual perception of this participant's performance in the reading paper tests.

Graph 32



The graph clearly shows the wide gap existing between the red line (class average marks) and the blue line (P22's marks). Only the test two score is superior to the class average and to the standard value. The other test scores are noticeably lower than the ESOL standard as well. The regression line is another indication that there was no improvement of skill in the dealings of the reading paper tests. This comes to confirm the prediction that was made at the beginning of this section when we looked at the learning strategies deployed by this participant.

Second, I will report the listening and use of English paper scores in the next table.

Table 86

Tests	1	2	3	4	Final exam
P22's listening scores	19	18	22	14	16
Class average listening scores	18.2	20	22.5	16,5	19.2
ESOL standard values	18	18	18	18	18
P22's Use of English scores	27	35	31	20	34
Class average use of English scores	31.9	30.9	33.5	31.2	38.7
ESOL standard value	38	38	38	38	38

P22's listening and use of English scores, class average and ESOL standard values

The participant's figures that appear in the listening and use of English rows do not seem to be any different from the figures registered for the reading paper scores above. In fact, only few values seem to be higher than the two reference values. In the reading paper results only test one and three are above the class average and the standard value, whereas in the use of English paper almost all the participant's scores are under the reference values. These differences, however, can be better appreciated in the deviation table below.

Table 84

Listening test deviations	0.8	-2	-0.5	-1.5	-3.2
ESOL listening deviations	1	0	4	-4	-2
Use of English test deviations	-4.9	4.1	-2.5	-11.2	-4.7
ESOL use of English deviations	-11	-3	-7	-18	-4

P22's listening and use of English deviation values

The table shows the differences between the participant's results and the reference values. The listening deviation values, the majority of which are tinted in red, are in line with the predictions made above, and are similar to the predictions made for the listening paper tests. Six out of ten values are in red which means that the participant has performed below the reference criterion. If we look at the last figures, we notice that the negative results increase with the subsequent tests. This is an indication that there has not been any skill improvement. On the contrary, I would say that there was a worsening in skill. What come as a surprise are the results of the use of English paper tests. According to the number of strategies deployed in this paper and the frequency rate, I would have expected fair results, but by looking at the deviation values in the

table, I have to conclude that the forecast was totally wrong, since these results are even worse than those relative to the listening paper tests. The low profile of this participant's results is also shown in the Statement of Results (appendix 6 P22). The marks of the three papers under scrutiny are below the "Weak" line. Only the speaking mark is above the "Borderline" followed by the writing mark which is just below the "Borderline". This candidate only obtained 46% of correct answers, too far to get the CAE diploma. This may be another case where too few strategies employed is tantamount to low profile in the test performance.

Table 85 *Participant 23*

P23's Strategy Choice Chart			
Strategy Nº	Read	UoE	List
1	2	3	
2	3	4	
3	3	2	
4		2	
5	4	2	
6	4	4	
7	2	4	
8	3	3	
9	2	2	
10	4	4	
11	3	1	
12	3	4	
13	1	2	
14	2	3	
15	3	4	
16	3	4	
17	1	3	
18	3	4	
19	3	2	
20	1	3	
21	4	2	
22	3	1	
23	2	4	
24		2	
25		1	
26		2	1
27		2	4
28		4	2
29		4	4
30		4	4

31		4	2
32		3	
33		2	
34		2	
35		3	
36		2	
Total strategies	22	36	6
Frequency rate	2.7	2.8	2.8

This participant exhibited an auditory learning style with eighteen points on the style assessment scale. The next preferred learning mode is the visual-non-verbal mode with seventeen points, followed by the visual-verbal and the tactile-kinaesthetic styles with fifteen points. Concerning strategy use, this participant was unwilling to use any of the strategies because he did not see how they would make him a better learner. Notwithstanding his unwillingness to use the strategies at the start of the course, he started reporting using some strategies later in the course. I still doubt, however, whether he really used them. Supposing that he did employ the learning strategies, with the auditory sensory perception his favourite channel, he hardly used any strategies related to the listening paper. In fact, in the report sheet he only marked the six strategies proposed for part four of the listening paper. However, he employed almost all strategies for the reading and the use of English papers. The table below shows this information.

As we can see from the table, the participant reported very few strategies suitable for the listening paper but he used all the strategies for the use of English paper and almost all the strategies for the reading paper. Moreover, this is the only participant who reported using a strategy devised by him in the use of English paper. According to the criteria that I have used so far, I can predict a low profile in the listening paper. This is the skill that I want to analyse in depth - having the candidate expressed an auditory sensory preference. Therefore, I will first deal with the scores of this paper and I will then approach the results of the other two papers. The table that appears below shows the figures in question.

Table 86

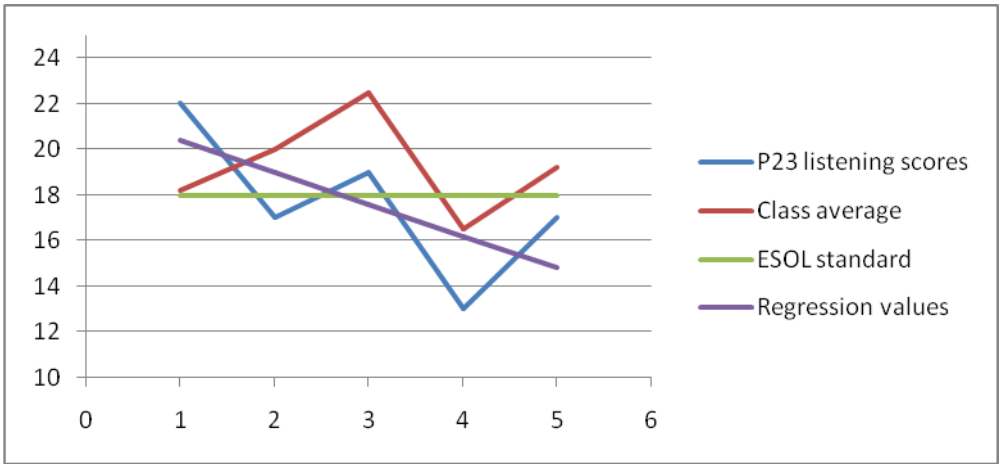
Tests	1	2	3	4	Final exam
P23's listening scores	22	17	19	13	17
Class average listening scores	18.2	20	22.5	16.5	192
ESOL standard listening value	18	18	18	18	18
Regression values	20.4	19	17.6	16.2	14.8

P23's listening scores, class average, ESOL standard and regression values

At a glance, we see that only the first score is higher than the reference values. The rest of the scores fall below both the class average and the ESOL standard. The regression

values are also in a descending order. The next graph will provide a visual relationship among these figures.

Graph 33



From the graph, we can see that the gap between the red line and the blue line is clear-cut. With the exception of the mark in the first test which is higher that the class average and the standard value, all the others are clearly inferior to the class average. In relation to the standard value, only two test marks are above the green line. The regression line presents an unequivocal downward trend as well. Thanks to these observations, I can conclude that the prediction I had made for this participant and test paper was correct. Concerning the other two papers, according to the number of strategies employed and keeping faithful to the judging criterion that I have been using so far, one is bound to say that the participant should do well with the results in the reading and use of English papers. Here are the results collected in the table below.

Table 87

Tests	1	2	3	4	5
P23's reading scores	27	28	37	31	29
Class average reading scores	30.6	33.2	37.6	32.6	31.6
ESOL standard reading value	32	32	32	32	32
P23's use of English scores	29	31	29	33	36
Class average use of English scores	31.9	30.9	33.5	31.2	38.7
ESOL standard value	38	38	38	38	38

P23's reading and use of English scores, class average and ESOL standard values

According to the figures that appear in the table, the participant's reading scores are all below the class average and in relation with the reading standard value only one

participant's score is superior to this value. Comparing the use of English score we have a similar situation: only two participant's scores are higher than the class averages, and none of them are better that the standard value. These differences are better shown in the following table.

Table 88

Reading test deviations	-3.6	-5.2	-0.6	-1.6	-2.6
ESOL reading deviations	-5	-4	5	-1	-3
Use of English test deviations	-2.9	0.1	-4.5	1.8	-2.7
ESOL use of English deviations	-9	-7	-9	-5	-2

P23's reading and use of English deviation values

What this table is showing is clear evidence of the poor performance of this participant in the execution of the reading and use of English paper tests. In the case of the reading paper tests, out of the ten results, only one of them is positive, and in the case of the use of English paper tests only two values are positive. We have to conclude, therefore, that my predictions were wrong concerning the results of the reading and use of English papers.

If we look at the Statement of Results (appendix 6 P23), we observe that the paper that scored the least is the reading paper, which is found below the "Weak" line, but the other two papers also scored low marks. Their positions in the candidate profile are in the "Weak – Borderline" band. The marks in the speaking and writing papers are a little better compared to the other three, but not sufficiently better to get him the overall pass mark. This participant only obtained 52% overall and therefore was not granted the CAE diploma. Lastly, concerning the participant's performance in the listening paper tests, which is the paper that I am considering in the first place due to the fact that the participant expressed his preference for the auditory learning channel, I have to conclude that the prediction I made for this participant was right. He used very few listening strategies to help boost his performance in the execution of the listening tests.

Table 89 *Participant 24*

P24's Strategy Choice Chart			
Strategy Nº	Read	UoE	List
1	3		
2	4	3	4
3	2	3	3
4	2	2	3

5	2	2	2
6	2	4	2
7	3	3	3
8	4	3	4
9	2	3	3
10	4	3	3
11	3	1	
12	3	4	
13	3	2	
14	2	3	
15	3	3	
16	2	4	
17	4	3	
18	3	3	
19	3	3	
20	3	3	
21	3	2	
22	2	1	
23	2	3	
24		2	
25		1	
26		1	4
27		2	1
28		3	3
29		4	1
30		4	1
31		4	2
32		4	
33		3	
34		2	
35		3	
36		3	
Total strategies	23	35	15
Frequency rate	2.8	2.8	2.6

The last participant exhibited an auditory learning preference with twenty points, but he shares this preference with the tactile-kinaesthetic style since he got the same points for this mode. He also obtained seventeen points in the visual-non-verbal learning style and sixteen points in the visual-verbal learning mode. This participant joined the group in January, at the beginning of the second term because he had spent the first term studying abroad in an English speaking country. This explains why the marks for the first test are not provided.

This candidate used the learning strategies knowing that they are a useful guide to learn more and to become a more autonomous English user and speaker. He practically used most of the strategies proposed to him, except for the listening strategies which he used only in part. Through direct observation, I can tell that this participant made good use of the learning strategies as he was an honest learner. Moreover, he made constant reference to the strategy chart. The strategies employed by this participant are shown in the next table.

The figures in the table indicate that this candidate used all the reading strategies and almost all the use of English strategies, but he only deployed half of the proposed listening strategies. The frequency of use rate is medium in the case of the reading and use of English proposed strategies and moderate in the case of the listening-learning strategies.

Based on this information, I can forecast only mediocre results for the listening paper tests. To be more precise, as I know from direct observation that this participant took the employment of strategies seriously, I dare predict that his results are not as satisfactory as they could have been, had he deployed a higher number of listening strategies. Therefore, I can anticipate only fair results for this participant in the listening paper tests. In the case of the reading and use of English paper tests I foresee better

results compared to the results of the listening paper. The table below reports the test results of the listening paper and the corresponding reference values.

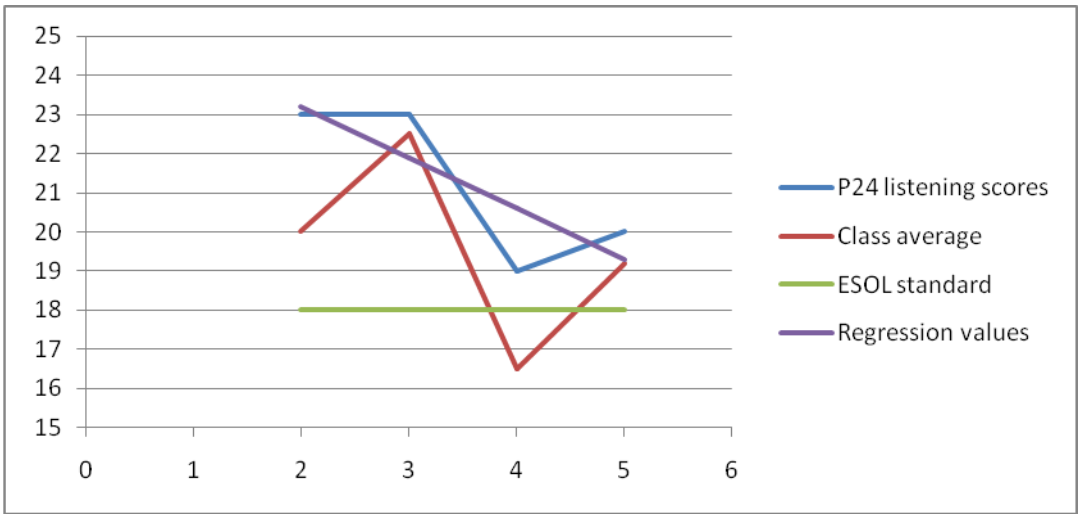
Table 90

Tests	2	3	4	Final exam
P24's listening scores	23	23	19	20
Class average listening scores	20	22.5	16.5	19.2
ESOL standard value	18	18	18	18
Regression values	23.2	21.9	20.6	19.3

P24's listening scores, class average, ESOL standard and regression values

As anticipated in the introduction of this participant, test one figure is missing for the reason given above. The other participant's listening scores are all higher than the reference values. If we shift our attention to the regression values, we notice that they are in a descending order. This could be in part explained by the fact that the participant did not make full use of the listening paper strategies that were made available to him. However, to get a visual profile of this participant's performance in the listening paper tests, I will transfer these figures onto the following graph.

Graph 31



The graph clearly shows that the blue line position is above the red line and the green line positions. This fact indicates that the participant performed above the reference values. On the other hand, the downward trend of the purple line indicates that the participant not only failed to improve the high grades of the first two tests (twenty-three scale points: five points above the pass mark), but he relaxed his effort to continue to perform at a high level, resulting in lower scores in the last two tests. After all, we can

consider that these results fit with what was anticipated for this candidate in the listening tests. Next, I will collect the test results for the reading and use of English papers and show them in the next table.

Table 91

Tests	2	3	4	Final exam
P24's reading scores	27		33	33
Class average reading scores	33.2	37.6	32.6	31.6
ESOL standard reading value	32	32	32	32
P24's Use of English scores	25	38	31	43
Class average use of English scores	30.9	33.5	31.2	38.7
ESOL standard use of English value	38	38	38	38

P24's reading and use of English scores, class average and ESOL standard values

As in the listening tests even in these two papers, test one score is missing, and in the case of the reading tests even test three score is missing. By looking at the figures in the table, we can say that, in general the majority of the participant's values are higher that the reference values. In the case of the reading paper, for example, the results of tests four and the final exam are better than the average and the standard values. The same can be argued in the case of the use of English results. These considerations will be made clearer when the figures are contrasted and collected in the next table.

Table 92

Reading test deviations	-6.5		0.4	14
ESOL reading deviations	-5		1	1
Use of English test deviations	-5.9	4.5	-0.2	4.3
ESOL use of English deviations	-13	0	-7	5

P24's reading and use of English deviation values

As we can see from the table, the positive signs outnumber the negative one. but that is not all; if we focus on the individual differences, we notice that these differences increase towards the final exam. This is an indication that there has been an improvement. Such improvement has culminated in good marks in the final exam which have merited the overall pass mark and, therefore, the concession of the CAE title by Cambridge ESOL (see appendix 6 P24). This outcome is in line with what was forecasted when I considered the employment of the strategies by this participant.

7.10.4. Considerations about the second group of participants

The first consideration concerns the number of candidates that obtained the CAE diploma. Five out of twelve is not considered a good number and in percentage is equivalent to only forty-two percent. However, many of those who did not reach the minimum required to make the grade, failed with only a few points: four, five or even six points out of a hundred. Only two candidates obtained marks below fifty per cent. The positive note is that all the members of the class decided to take the CAE exam at the end of the course. In other courses and in the past years, this was not the case. There are always candidates who do not feel ready or sufficiently motivated to face the CAE exam, which is known to entail certain difficulties. Cambridge recommends this exam to candidates in the eighteen-twenty age range.

I have also observed that the participants in this group have been more selective when it came to choose the strategies. They decided to choose some strategies but also decided not to choose other strategies. A good number of them decided to choose very few strategies in one paper and sometimes chose none in other papers. In some cases the deployment of strategies was in the three papers. The results can be classified in three groups (see table below). There are participants who used the appropriate strategies and got the expected results. This is the case with participants P17, P18, P19, P20 and P24 (in green). There are participants who did not use enough or suitable learning strategies and got the anticipated negative results. This is the case with participants P14, P21, P22 and P23 (in red). Finally, there are participants who, in spite of using the appropriate strategies, got negative results. These are participants P13, P15 and P16 (in blue). The results of these last three participants are atypical since the predictions that were anticipated for them are wrong. The results of the rest of the participants, whether positive or negative, responded to the predictions that were made for them. The table below synthesises the data exhibited above.

Table 93

Participants	Learning style	Suitable Strategies	Prediction	Results
P13	Auditory	Yes	Good	Negative
P14	Auditory	No	Bad	Negative
P15	Auditory	Yes	Good	Negative
P16	Auditory	Yes	Good	Negative
P17	Visual-verbal	Yes	Good	Positive
P18	Auditory	Yes	Good	Positive
P19	Auditory	Yes	Good	Positive
P20	Auditory	Yes	Good	Positive
P21	Auditory	No	Bad	Negative
P22	Visual-verbal	No	Bad	Negative
P23	Auditory	No	Bad	Negative
P24	Auditory	Yes	Good	Positive

As was observed with participants four, ten and eleven in the first group, even in the second group, we notice that good results are linked to the deployment of a high number of strategies. This is the case of participants seventeen, eighteen, nineteen and especially twenty. However, notwithstanding this observation, the following reality should be pointed out. When I state that the afore-mentioned participants used a great deal of strategies and, as a consequence, got good results, I mean that they did well in that particular skill (reading or listening). In the majority of the cases, this also implies that they did well in other skills and as a consequence obtained the corresponding Cambridge diploma. In other cases, however, it does not have to be so. It could well be that the participant did well in the skill under scrutiny because he used the appropriate strategies, but did badly in other skills and did not get the Cambridge diploma. This is

certainly the case with P4, P9 and P17. Supposedly, the opposite is also true. Some participants performed poorly in the skill under scrutiny because they did not use suitable strategies, but in the end they obtained the Cambridge diploma because they did well in other skills. This is the case with P6, P8, P12 and P14.

In summary, the most important considerations that we can draw from the content of the two tables is that out of the twenty-four participants, twelve of them used a good number of strategies and exhibited positive results; five participants used few or no strategies and got negative results; another four participants used appropriate strategies but obtained negative results; two participants got mixed results; and finally, one participant obtained good results in spite of not using suitable strategies. We can conclude, therefore, that in seventeen cases out of twenty-four the results responded to the expectations. What remains to be seen is whether this proportion is statistically significant or not.

7.11. A statistical test applied to the results

Table 94

Suitable strategies	Results	Related
Yes	Positive	1
Yes	Positive	1
Yes	Positive	1
Yes	Positive	1
No	Negative	1
No	Positive	0
Yes	Negative	0
Yes	Mixed	1
Yes	Positive	1
Yes	Positive	1
Yes	Positive	1
Some	Mixed	1
Yes	Negative	0
No	Negative	1
Yes	Negative	0
Yes	Negative	0
Yes	Positive	1
Yes	Positive	1
Yes	Positive	1

Yes	Positive	1
No	Negative	1
No	Negative	1
No	Negative	1
Yes	Positive	1

Now, since we want to see whether there is a relationship between two categorical variables (i.e. does the suitability of the learning strategy used influence the result obtained?) we can use the Chi squared test. This test is based on the idea of comparing the frequencies we observe in certain categories to the frequencies we might expect to get in these categories by chance. The null hypothesis is that there is no relationship between the suitability of the learning strategies used and the results obtained.

The above table can be summarized as:
Agreement = 19; Non-agreement=5
If selected by chance we would expect:
Agreement=12; Non-agreement=12

The statistical package SAS was used for the analysis and the following results were obtained:

Table 95

Table of predict by outcome			
predict(Does Strategy predict Result)	outcome		
Frequency	Agree	Disagree	Total
No	12	12	24
Yes	19	5	24
Total	31	17	48

Table 96

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	1	4.4630	0.0346
Likelihood Ratio Chi-Square	1	4.5642	0.0326
Continuity Adj. Chi-Square	1	3.2789	0.0702
Mantel-Haenszel Chi-Square	1	4.3700	0.0366
Phi Coefficient		-0.3049	

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Contingency Coefficient		0.2917	
Cramer's V		-0.3049	

The statistic that is of interest here is the Chi-Square statistic and we see that it has a probability below 0.05 which enables us to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is an ***association*** between Suitable Strategy and Result.

A study with similar characteristics as this one was carried out very recently. Muelas (2011: 1-2) sets out in his research to find out which factors influence academic performance. He addresses his analysis to three wide fields of studies: the intellectual field (aptitude for learning), the strategic field (cognitive, metacognitive and affective), and the personality factor field (responsibility, social skills and self-esteem). He worked with teenagers in the sophomore (4th ESO) and junior (1st Bach.) years of high school in the region of Madrid (Spain) and based his study on official statistics of state, independent and charter schools.

His findings have been that personality factors affect negatively academic performance at this age. He also found that although a correlation exists between intelligence and academic performance, it is with the learning strategies that he found a stronger correlation with academic performance. He concludes that the strong correlation between learning strategies and academic achievements is especially true in the independent schools (pg. 225).

More evidence about the distinctive character of learning strategies when they are used in a learning context can be found in the same setting where this study was carried out. The Study 2 took place between September 2010 and June 2011. As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter the object of study were two classes preparing to sit the Cambridge examinations: one FCE class (twelve learners) and one CAE class (twelve learners). These classes were given as extra-curricular training.

Table 97

CLASSES	C0	C1	C2
Nº learners in the classroom (FCE)	12	11	10
Nº learners who sat the exam (FCE)	10	9	9
Nº learners who passed the exam (FCE)	8	7	5

Nº learners in the classroom (CAE)	12	10	
Nº learners who sat the exam (CAE)	12	7	
Nº learners who passed the exam (CAE)	5	2	

Comparative table (source: school file)

At the same time, another three such classes were going on with other teachers. One CAE class and one FCE class were taught by one teacher, and the other FCE class was taught by another teacher. I would like to report here the number of learners in each of the three classes, the number of students who sat for the final exam, and lastly the number of students who obtained a pass mark. The first teacher had ten candidates in the CAE class, seven sat the exam and only two passed it. In the FCE class the first teacher had eleven candidates, nine sat the exam and seven passed. The second teacher had nine candidates in an FCE class, eight sat the exam and six passed it. If we compare these figures and place them in a chart, we get the table above. C0 (in green) represents the classes that received learning strategy training; C1 and C2 (in grey) represent the classes that did not receive any strategy training. To make the differences stand out more clearly the above absolute values are converted in percentages, taking twelve as the highest value since this was the number of students allowed in the class.

Table 98

CLASSES	C0	C1	C2
Nº learners in the classroom (FCE)	100%	92%	83%
Nº learners who sat the exam (FCE)	83%	82%	90%
Nº learners who passed the exam (FCE)	80%	77%	55%
Nº learners in the classroom (CAE)	100%	83%	
Nº learners who sat the exam (CAE)	100%	70%	
Nº learners who passed the exam (CAE)	42%	28%	

Comparative tables in percentages

Ideally, each class should have twelve candidates; the same number should sit the exam; and, all the candidates should pass it. Unfortunately, the reality shows a different face. The table shows the percentages of candidates who formed the class. We can see that only the C0 classes (strategy training) had the full number of candidates allowed

(12=100%). The other three classes registered 92%, 83% and 83% of occupancy. The second value is the percentage of candidates who actually sat the exam. The table indicates that the only class who sat 100% of candidates is the CAE class from the C0 column, followed by the FCE class from the C2 column with 90%, then the FCE group from the C0 column with 83%, the FCE group from the C1 column with 82% and, finally, the CAE group from the C1 column with 70%. The last value is the percentage of candidates who passed the exam. Again, we see the highest values in the C0 column. The best pass percentage in the FCE exams was obtained by the C0 column with 80%, followed by the C1 column with 77%, and finally by the C2 column with 55%. The best pass percentage in the CAE exams was registered by the C0 column again with 42%, followed by the C1 column with 28%. The table shows that of the possible six best values, five fell on the groups that have adopted and received learning strategy training.

A similar analysis can be drawn of the previous year. By the previous year we refer to academic year 2009-2010. That year counted with four FCE groups and one CAE group. The table below illustrates the distribution of the groups.

Table 99

CLASSES	C0	C0	C1	C1	C2
Nº learners in the classroom (FCE)	12	12	12	10	
Nº learners who sat the exam (FCE)	12	12	11	10	
Nº learners who passed the exam (FCE)	5	5	5	4	
Nº learners in the classroom (CAE)					12
Nº learners who sat the exam (CAE)					10
Nº learners who passed the exam (CAE)					4

Comparative table 2009-2010 (source: school file)

As we can see, the previous year the school organised four FCE groups and one CAE groups. Almost all the groups operated at their full capacity, considering that only twelve candidates were permitted to register in each group. Even the number of candidates who sat the final exam is pretty high. The number of learners who passed the final exam, however, dropped markedly. The table below shows the percentages of the values represented in the table above.

Table 100

CLASSES	C0	C0	C1	C1	C2
Nº learners in the classroom (FCE)	100%	100%	100%	100%	
Nº learners who sat the exam (FCE)	100%	100%	92%	100%	
Nº learners who passed the exam (FCE)	42%	42%	45%	40%	
Nº learners in the classroom (CAE)					100%
Nº learners who sat the exam (CAE)					83%
Nº learners who passed the exam (CAE)					40%

Comparative table 2009-2010 in percentages

As we can see from the two tables the final results are noticeably low all across the five groups, even in the courses where the learning strategies were used. I will not analyse these results as they are evidently poor, and I do not have any explanations either. We will face a different scenario when we analyse the Cambridge groups that the school organised the previous year, in 2008-2009.

During this year, the school offered three FCE courses only. Two groups were taught with a focus on learning strategies, and the third one received standard training. The results of these courses are shown in the table below.

Table 101

CLASSES	C0	C0	C1
Nº learners in the classroom (FCE)	12	12	11
Nº learners who sat the exam (FCE)	12	11	10
Nº learners who passed the exam (FCE)	11	10	2

Comparative table year 2008-2009 (source: school file)

At first sight we see a significant difference in results between those groups who received learning strategy training (the groups in green) and the group that was taught with the traditional method (in grey). These figures will be even more explicit once we convert them to percentages.

Table 102

CLASSES	C0	C0	C1
Nº learners in the classroom (FCE)	100%	100%	92%
Nº learners who sat the exam (FCE)	100%	92%	91%
Nº learners who passed the exam (FCE)	92%	91%	20%

Comparative table year 2008-2009 in percentages

With reference to the maximum number of candidates allowed in each group, we see that the two groups where learning strategy training (C0) was employed registered the highest value. Concerning the number of learners who decided to take the final exam, one of the C0 group again registered the highest value. The most striking difference is shown in the final results. In one of the C0 groups, eleven candidates out of twelve, equivalent to 92%, made the grade. In the other C0 group, ten candidates out of eleven, equivalent to 91%, passed the final exam. The group that was trained with the traditional method could only declare two passes out of ten (equivalent to 20%) possible candidates. A possible explanation of this difference in the results will be attempted in the following section where other related issues will be discussed.

7.12. Discussion and conclusion

On the basis of the information handled so far, and the observations made together with a few conclusions already advanced in the previous pages, it can cautiously be stated that the deployment of suitable strategies appropriately chosen to fit that/those particular learning style(s) apparently brings about an improvement in language learning and use on the part of the learner. According to these findings, the opposite is also true: when learners do not make use of strategies that allow them to take control of the learning process, poor leaning outcomes and deficient skill building ensues.

However, is this issue really that simple? Some voices from the ESL community have continued to question the theoretical basis of the concept of strategy. One major consideration is strongly put forward: what are the principles, whether cognitive, emotional or behavioural that underpin the theoretical construct of strategies, or what studies have been conducted that have reached the definite conclusion that these strategies or group of strategies are responsible for learners' improvement?

Some authors express their convictions that there exists a fine line between language training and language learning strategy training. Dörney (2005; in Cohen *et al.* 2007:

25), for example, asks whether LLSs actually exist as a psychological construct. For this author "the most fundamental problem is the literature's inability to explain the difference between engaging in an ordinary learning activity and a strategic learning activity". This same author criticises the existing taxonomies for classifying strategies, namely Oxford (1990), being that individual strategies can belong to one or another group. All these criticisms are perfectly plausible and should exist to stimulate further research. On the other hand, investigation in the field of LLS has been going on for over thirty years boosted by positive and unequivocal results. The LLS community has been joined by new researchers, and the literature on the subject is experiencing significant growth. This has been possible because "learner strategies were firmly linked to achievement, and proficiency continued to be the major claim made by some authors, despite the above arguments" (Cohen, 2007: 24). Other authors (Hsiao and Oxford, 2002: 369) claimed that strategies were linked to proficiency or achievement, although an explanation of how strategies operate directly with these two factors was not provided. In one aspect, the above criticism is right because it leads to a consideration shared by the entire LLS community: that still more research is needed in the LLS field.

Going back to the narrower issue that interests this study of whether the strategy selection will influence the effectiveness of learners, the answer is, as the results are showing, quite evident. One, however, can argue that many other variables can influence the effectiveness of the strategies, such as gender, age, motivation, attitude and aptitude, the task at hand, the learning environments and others. In this study, I have tried to reduce to a minimum the number of loose variables, or at least to have less uncontrolled variables than in the first study. Since its conception, this study tried to homogenise the members of the two groups, as was explained in the first sections, so that the selection of the most suitable strategies would stand out as the distinctive component.

In September 2004 a questionnaire (Cohen *et al.* 2007: 30) was run among the most leading and respected exponents of the LLS community that was designed to address key issues on this topic. One of these issues was addressed in question 6.6 (ibid: 37) which enquired about the effectiveness of the strategies employed. The statement that the respondents were asked to react is the following:

> The strategies a learner uses and the effectiveness of these strategies very much depend on the learner him/herself (for example, age, gender, language aptitude, intelligence,

> cognitive and *learning style preferences* (emphasis added), self-concept/image, personality, attitudes, motivation, prior knowledge), the learning task at hand (for example, type, complexity, difficulty, and generality) and the learning environment (for example, the learning culture, the richness of input and output opportunities). We must view strategies within this larger framework to properly interpret their role in the language learning process.

This statement received almost universal support. Such reaction could not have been otherwise since many of these experts, who have been in the field for a long time, know how much strategy training is influencing the field of foreign language training. Coincidentally, the same factors that appear in the statement have been taken into consideration when this study was conceived: age, gender, language aptitude, intelligence, attitude (there was one exception in reference to this variable), motivation, prior knowledge, the task at hand, and the learning environment (as was explained in the section about *The Setting*). The two groups under scrutiny were homogeneously composed by participants with these similar characteristics, but with the exception of self-image and personality traits because these are concepts very difficult to pin down and control. So, what is left is the focussing on *learning style preferences* that together with the strategy choice account for the results reported in this study.

CHAPTER VIII: CONCLUSIONS

CHAPTER VIII: Conclusion

8. Conclusions

I began this dissertation criticising the current state of affairs in our school system. I pointed out that the way the public and private education is set up does not respond to the necessities of modern times. Western society is immersed in an imperious necessity to learn foreign languages. High school and university students need to develop those abilities that will enable them to acquire foreign languages more readily and effectively. Holec (see page 11) and Little (page 13) propose a new approach to help convert our students from the teacher-dependent figure that we know today, to independent and autonomous learners. Holec advocates a society where its members move from the idea of man "product of society" to the idea of man "producer of society" (page 11). Holec and Little, among many others (see Chapter 1), suggest the creation of a different learning environment to foster the achievement of *learner autonomy* (see Chapter 1). The concept of learner autonomy carries more than one implication. A major implication is the sharing of responsibility between the teacher and the learners. These should be given the possibility to choose the content to be learned, the methods to carry out the lessons, the material means and the evaluation criteria. Only this way we can expect our learners to be able to make decisions. For this, we need not wait until the person reaches university. The participation in the decision-making process should start much earlier. When learners take part in the decision-making process, they will feel more responsible about their studies and will develop more self-esteem. In order to achieve this, a change of roles is needed in our school system. The dropout rate would certainly go down. More than one educational institution has started to travel that road and the results are promising (see pages 28-30).

Among the many factors necessary to reach this objective I mentioned the learning styles and strategies as means to achieve learner autonomy. The former can be defined as the preferred way of learning, while the latter could be defined as the actions, steps or behaviour that the learner uses to enhance her learning. There is

growing evidence that the deployment of learning strategies, appropriately selected to suit the person's learning style(s), is responsible for better results in the learning process.

Chapter IV deals with teaching methodologies. We have seen how the teaching methods have evolved along the last fifty years, parallel to the evolution of the numerous learning theories. We have witnessed how these learning theories have served as support to the teaching methodologies. Another important observation is that all teaching methodologies bring with them, embedded in their formulation or procedures, learning strategies. These strategies are very often used in a subconscious way. In such cases, the learner needs to gain *declarative knowledge* of learning strategies if they are to serve him. To become aware of this knowledge involves effort because it is not automatic or outside of consciousness. It consists of *semantic knowledge* and *episodic knowledge*. A learning strategy is a form of declarative knowledge if the learner can easily talk about it (Oxford, 2011: 50). This is why language learning strategy training is essential.

Chapter V gives a streamlined overview of the most widely known learning theories of language learning. All these theories place the learner at the centre of the teaching-learning process. They take into account the cognitive (Piaget), affective (Rogers) and social (Vygotsky) aspects of the learners. They advocate a threat-free learning setting, where the learner is the main protagonist. We have seen the big contribution that these theories have provided in the educational field.

Finally, I have described the two studies. One was carried out seven years ago and the other one about a year ago. Both studies aimed at demonstrating whether the appropriate use of learning strategies brings about better performance in the learning and use of a foreign language. The results tend to indicate that those learners who used the appropriate strategies scored higher marks in the tests, compared to those learners who used few or no strategies at all. The application of the Chi square test to the results did not resolve that there exists a correlation between suitable strategies and results, but suggested that there is an *association* between these two factors. This conclusion is in line with other studies that I have cited and quoted along this dissertation. Foreign language learners' achievements have been linked to strategy

use, but the mechanisms through which these achievements occur are to this day unknown. Maybe future research should aim in that direction.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 A

Visual-verbal

Dear Learner,

According to the answers you provided in the Style Inventory Questionnaire, you learn best when information is presented visually and in a written language format. In a classroom setting, you benefit from instructors who use the blackboard (or overhead projector) to list the essential points of a lecture, or who provide you with an outline to follow along with during lecture. You benefit from information obtained from textbooks and class notes. You tend to like to study by yourself in a quiet room. You often see information "in your mind's eye" when you are trying to remember something.

Learning Strategies for the Visual/ Verbal Learner:
To aid recall, make use of "color coding" when studying new information in your textbook or notes. Using highlighter pens, highlight different kinds of information in contrasting colors.

Write out sentences and phrases that summarize key information obtained from your textbook and lecture.

Make flashcards of vocabulary words and concepts that need to be memorized. Use highlighter pens to emphasize key points on the cards. Limit the amount of information per card so your mind can take a mental "picture" of the information.

When learning information presented in diagrams or illustrations, write out explanations for the information.

When learning mathematical or technical information, write out in sentences and key phrases your understanding of the material. When a problem involves a sequence of steps, write out in detail how to do each step.

Make use of computer word processing. Copy key information from your notes and textbook into a computer. Use the print-outs for visual review.

Before an exam, make yourself visual reminders of information that must be memorized. Make "stick it" notes containing key words and concepts and place them in highly visible places --on your mirror, notebook, car dashboard, etc..

Good luck and good training!!

Appendix 1B

Visual-non-verbal

Dear learner,

According to the answers that you have provided in the Style Inventory Questionnaire, you learn best when information is presented visually and in a picture or design format. In a classroom setting, you benefit from instructors who use visual aids such as film, video, maps and charts. You benefit from information obtained from the pictures and diagrams in textbooks. You tend to like to work in a quiet room and may not like to work in study groups. When trying to remember something, you can often visualize a picture of it in your mind. You may have an artistic side that enjoys activities having to do with visual art and design.

Learning Strategies for the Visual/ Nonverbal Learner:
Make flashcards of key information that needs to be memorized. Draw symbols and pictures on the cards to facilitate recall. Use highlighter pens to highlight key words and pictures on the flashcards. Limit the amount of information per card, so your mind can take a mental "picture" of the information.

Mark up the margins of your textbook with key words, symbols, and diagrams that help you remember the text. Use highlighter pens of contrasting colors to "color code" the information.

When learning mathematical or technical information, make charts to organize the information. When a mathematical problem involves a sequence of steps, draw a series of boxes, each containing the appropriate bit of information in sequence.

Use large square graph paper to assist in creating charts and diagrams that illustrate key concepts.

Use the computer to assist in organizing material that needs to be memorized. Using word processing, create tables and charts with graphics that help you to understand and retain course material. Use spreadsheet and database software to further organize material that needs to be learned.

As much as possible, translate words and ideas into symbols, pictures, and diagrams.

Good luck and good training!!

Appendix 1 C

Auditory

Dear Learner

According to the answers that you provided in the Style Inventory Questionnaire you learn best when information is presented auditory in an oral language format. In a classroom setting, you benefit from listening to lecture and participating in group discussions. You also benefit from obtaining information from audio tape. When trying to remember something, you can often "hear" the way someone told you the information, or the way you previously repeated it out loud. You learn best when interacting with others in a listening/speaking exchange.

Strategies for the Auditory/ Verbal Learner:
Join a study group to assist you in learning course material. Or, work with a "study buddy" on an ongoing basis to review key information and prepare for exams.

When studying by yourself, talk out loud to aid recall. Get yourself in a room where you won't be bothering anyone and read your notes and textbook out loud.

Tape record your lectures. Use the 'pause' button to avoid taping irrelevant information. Use a tape recorder equipped with a 3-digit counter. At the beginning of each lecture, set your counter to '000.' If a concept discussed during lecture seems particularly confusing, glance at the counter number and jot it down in your notes. Later, you can fast forward to that number to review the material that confused you during lecture. Making use of a counter and pause button while tape recording allows you to avoid the tedious task of having to listen to hours and hours of lecture tape.

Use audio tapes such as commercial books on tape to aid recall. Or, create your own audio tapes by reading notes and textbook information into a tape recorder. When preparing for an exam, review the tapes on your car tape player or on a "Walkman" player whenever you can.

When learning mathematical or technical information, "talk your way" through the new information. State the problem in your own words. Reason through solutions to problems by talking out loud to yourself or with a study partner. To learn a sequence of steps, write them out in sentence form and read them out loud.

Good luck and good training!!

Appendix 1 D

Tactile-Kinaesthetic

Dear Learner,

According to the answers that you have provided in the Style Inventory Questionnaire you learn best when physically engaged in a "hands on" activity. In the classroom, you benefit from a lab setting where you can manipulate materials to learn new information. You learn best when you can be physically active in the learning environment. You benefit from instructors who encourage in-class demonstrations, "hands on" student learning experiences, and field work outside the classroom.

Strategies for the Tactile/ Kinesthetic Learner:

To help you stay focused on class lecture, sit near the front of the room and take notes throughout the class period. Don't worry about correct spelling or writing in complete sentences. Jot down key words and draw pictures or make charts to help you remember the information you are hearing.

When studying, walk back and forth with textbook, notes, or flashcards in hand and read the information out loud.

Think of ways to make your learning tangible, i.e. something you can put your hands on. For example, make a model that illustrates a key concept. Spend extra time in a lab setting to learn an important procedure. Spend time in the field (e.g. a museum, historical site, or job site) to gain first-hand experience of your subject matter.

To learn a sequence of steps, make 3'x 5' flashcards for each step. Arrange the cards on a table top to represent the correct sequence. Put words, symbols, or pictures on your flashcards -- anything that helps you remember the information. Use highlighter pens in contrasting colors to emphasize important points. Limit the amount of information per card to aid recall. Practice putting the cards in order until the sequence becomes automatic.

When reviewing new information, copy key points onto a chalkboard, easel board, or other large writing surface.

Make use of the computer to reinforce learning through the sense of touch. Using word processing software, copy essential information from your notes and textbook. Use graphics, tables, and spreadsheets to further organize material that must be learned.

Listen to audio tapes on a Walkman tape player while exercising. Make your own tapes containing important course information.

Good luck and good training!!

Source: Catherine Jester (2000) http://www.metamath.com/lsweb/dvclearn.html

Appendix 2

Learning Strategies

(J. Rubin, 1981: 9)

A. Clarification/verification:

1. Asks for an example of how to use a particular word/expression.
2. Repeats word to confirm understanding.
3. Repeats part of words or sentence, asks for the rest.
4. Asks for correct form to use.
5. Puts word in sentence to check understanding.
6. Asks for translation from native to second language or vice versa.
7. Asks question about culture.
8. Asks for repetition (of sentence or word).
9. Asks for meaning of item/sentence/phrase.
10. Looks up words in dictionary or structure in grammar books.
11. Asks for difference between two words or sentences.
12. Asks if given utterance is correct.
13. Asks if rule fits a particular case.
14. Restates in own words or briefer terms ('just' means 'only').
15. Paraphrases a sentence to check understanding.
16. Asks for paraphrase to check understanding.
17. Asks to be corrected
18. Asks if a given form is explained by a previously learned rule.

B. Monitoring:

1. Corrects error in own/others's pronunciation, vocabulary, spelling, grammar, and style.

2. Observes and analysis language use of others to see how message was interpreted by addressee.
3. Notes source of own error e.g., own language interference, other language interference.

C. Memorization:

Of words, frequently-used simple sentences, basic sentence patterns, songs, verb declensions, dialogues/monologues, and formulaic chunks.

1. Takes notes of new items with or without examples, with or without context, with or without definitions.
2. Pronounces out loud.
3. Finds some sort of association (semantic, visual, auditory, and kinesic).
4. Uses other mechanical devises e.g., puts new words in right pocket, moves to the left when learned; writes out items to be learned several times, etc.

D. Guessing inductive inferencing: uses hunches from a wide variety of range of possible sources of meaning for a particular circumstance.
   1. Uses clues from the following to guess the meaning:

      Other items in a sentence/phrase

      Key words in a sentence

      Syntactic structure

      Pictures

      Context of discourse

      Topic of discourse

      Gestures

      Word association or other features which are contingent on each other

      Intonation

      Own native language or other foreign language

      Part of word

      Narrative conversational sequence

   2. Correlates word with action.
   3. Distinguishes relevant from irrelevant clues in deducing meaning.
   4. Ignores difficult words: tries to get an overall picture.

E. Deductive reasoning (looks for and uses general rules):

   1. Compares native/other languages to target language to help identify regular similarities and differences (from: A. Cohen)
   2. Groups words according to similarity of endings (from: A. Cohen)
   3. Looks for rules of co-occurence restrictions and contextual stylistic rules

4. Infers grammatical rules by analogy
5. Infers vocabulary by analogy (e.g., nación=nation; then relación=relation)
6. Recognizes patterns of own pronunciation and grammatical difficulties.
7. Notes exceptions to rules and questions rules for this.
8. When using dictionary, recognizes limitations of dictionary in providing equivalents and develops a theory about the nature of these limitations.
9. Develops and revises grasp of target language on a continuing basis: processing new information, discarding hypothesis, formulating new ones.
10. Finds meaning of item/word by breaking it down into parts.

F. Practice:

1. Experiments with new sounds in isolation and in context, uses mirror for practice.
2. Repeats sentences until produced easily.
3. Practices intonation contours, e,g., begins with shorter sentences and then lengthens sentences by adding adjectives and adverbs; maintains rhythm all the time.
4. Talks to self in target language (e.g., tells self what he/she did all day).
5. Consciously applies grammatical rules when speaking (from: A. Cohen)
6. Drills self on words in different forms (from: A. Cohen).
7. Makes use of new words when speaking.
8. When corrected, practices correct form, possibly extending it to other contexts.
9. Listens carefully to what is said and how it is said: accent, intonation, tone and stress, register: tries to imitate pronunciation and other aspects (from: A: Cohen).

II. Processes which may contribute indirectly to learning:

A. Creates opportunity for practice
   1. Creates opportunities with natives in order to verify/test/practice.
   2. Initiates conversation with fellow student/teacher/native speaker.
   3. Answers to self questions to other students.
   4. Spends extra time in language lab.
   5. Listens to TV/radio, attends movies or parties or uses advertisements, reads extra books often first in native language, then in target language.
   6. Identifies learning preferences and selects learning situations accordingly (from: Naiman, Fröhlich and Stern).

B. Production tricks: related to communication focus/drive, probably related to motivation and opportunity for exposure.

1. Uses circumlocution and paraphrase to get message across.
2. Uses synonym to communicate meaning e.g., shut=closed.
3. Repeats sentence to further understanding.
4. Uses a cognate, whether right or wrong.
5. Uses 'formulaic' interactionally focussed utterances to keep conversation going (from: L.W. Fillmore).
6. Directs conversation to where he/she has sufficient strength; if doesn't know a word, approximates it, describes it (paraphrase), or makes up a word.
7. Uses gestures to communicate meaning.
8. Puts into context to clarify meaning, e.g., sing (a song).
9. Uses simple sentences.
10. Spells words out to make meaning clear.
11. Speaks more slowly or more rapidly.
12. Writes word out.

III. Examples of Cognitive Processes and Strategies:

A. Clarification/verification

1. Repeats parts to verify:
   Teacher says 'election'

   Student says 'lection'

   Teacher says 'to elect'

   Student says 'election'

2. Restates to verify:
   'fun' means 'enjoy'

   'just means 'only'

3. Asks for information:
   How different 'borrow' from 'lend'?

   Which is correct: It is of Japanese made or It is made in Japan?

4. Asks for clarification:
   Part of it?

B. Monitoring

Corrects 'we don't' to 'we didn't receive'

Corrects pronunciation 'dink' to 'think'

Corrects 50 hundred, to 15 dollars

Corrects others; Student 1: People in Hawai wear cultural clothes.

Student 2: casual clothes.

C. Practice

Says *a lot of* (enphasizing the *l*)

Repeats 'quite a while' instead of defining the phrase as requested.

Examples of strategies from daily self-reports:

1. Asks for repetition.
2. Catches some words.
3. Guesses based on these words and context?
4. Asks for further clarification.
5. Memorizes words in context.
6. Makes up sentences, tries to use sentences with native speakers.
7. Gets native speaker to help her.
8. Uses laughter as cue to mistakes.
9. Keen awareness of stylistic (contextual) differences.
10. Seems to be looking for co-occurrences rules
11. Practices with self.
12. Memorizes basic sentences.
13. Uses these as a basis for comparison.
14. Uses context to understand the essentials.
15. Knows and uses basic words/phrases to get necessary info.
16. Listens for essential info, related to context.
17. Listens for key words.
18. Sees relation between meaning and intonation.
19. Recognizes some sort of conversational sequence which enables student to guess the question.
20. Uses specific context to learn language.
21. Uses pictures to guess meaning.
22. Recognizes idiomatic/stylistic characteristics.
23. Questions co-occurrence rules.
24. Recognizes limitation of dictionary.
25. Uses circumlocution to get meaning across.

Appendix 3

Learning style questionnaires

Questionaire 1

BARSCH LEARNING STYLE REFERENCE FORM

Developed by Ray Barsch (1999)

The series of questions on the next three pages is designed to determine your relative learning style (visual, auditory, or tactile). No style of learning is better than another. However, each style makes its own demands on the environment of the learner. What does a tutor perceive to be the learning style of his student? How can he help that student learn, given that particular style?

Place a check on the appropriate line after each statement. Then score, following the directions after the questionnaire.

	Statements	Often	Some times	Seldom
1	Can remember more about a subject through listening than reading.	____	____	____
2	Follow written directions better than oral directions.	____	____	____
3	Like to write things down or take notes for visual review.	____	____	____
4	Bear down extremely hard with pen or pencil when writing.	____	____	____
5	Require explanations of diagrams, graphs, or visual directions.	____	____	____
6	Enjoy working with tools.	____	____	____
7	Am skilful and enjoy developing and making graphs and charts.	____	____	____
8	Can tell if sounds match when presented with pairs of sounds.	____	____	____
9	Remember best by writing things down several times.	____	____	____

10	Can understand and follow directions using maps.	____	____	____
11	Do better at academic subjects by listening to lectures and tapes.	____	____	____
12	Play with coins and keys in pockets.	____	____	____
13	Learn to spell better by repeating the letters out loud than by writing the word on paper.	____	____	____
14	Can better understand a news article by reading about it in the paper than by listening to the radio.	____	____	____
15	Chew gum, smoke, or snack during studies.	____	____	____
16	Feel the best way to remember is to picture it in my head.	____	____	____
17	Learn spelling by "finger spelling" the words.	____	____	____
18	Would rather listen to a good lecture or speech than read about the same material in a textbook.	____	____	____
19	Am good at working and solving jigsaw puzzles and mazes.	____	____	____
20	Grip objects in my hands during learning period.	____	____	____
21	Prefer listening to the news on the radio rather than reading about it in a newspaper.	____	____	____
22	Obtain information on an interesting subject by reading relevant materials.	____	____	____
23	Feel very comfortable touching others, hugging, handshaking, etc.	____	____	____
24	Follow oral directions better than written ones.	____	____	____

Scoring procedures:

Place the point value on the line next to its corresponding item number. Next, sum the values to arrive at your preference scores under each heading.

OFTEN = 5 POINTS
SOMETIMES = 3 POINTS
SELDOM = 1 POINT

VISUAL	**AUDITORY**	**TACTILE**
No. Pts.	No. Pts.	No. Pts.
2 _____	1 _____	4 _____
3 _____	5 _____	6 _____
7 _____	8 _____	9 _____
10 _____	11 _____	12 _____
14 _____	13 _____	15 _____
16 _____	18 _____	17 _____
19 _____	21 _____	20 _____
22 _____	24 _____	23 _____
_____	_____	_____
VPS =	APS =	TPS =

VPS = Visual Preference Score
APS = Auditory Preference Score
TPS = Tactile Preference Score

Questionnaire 2

HELPING STUDENTS IDENTIFY THEIR LEARNING PREFERENCE

(Visual, Auditory or Motor)

The questionnaire can be done in a small group or individually with the instructor reading the questions and the student selecting the answer that best suits him or her.

The instructor should discuss the results with the student using the following questions:

1. Under which column did you check the most answers?
2. What kind of learning preference does it appear you have?
3. What learning or teaching methods do you think would best suit your preference?
4. What learning or teaching methods might not suit your preference as well?

(Instructors may need to offer suggestions like lectures, films, reading aloud, etc. for questions 3 and 4.)

Given below are a number of incomplete sentences and three ways of completing each sentence. In each case, select the way which most frequently represents your personal preference. In each case, make only ONE choice.

		A	**B**	**C**
1	When you keep up with current events do you:	Read the newspaper thoroughly?	listen to the radio and/or watch TV news?	Quickly read the paper and/or spend a few minutes watching TV news?
2	When you dress, are you:	a neat dresser?	a sensible dresser?	a comfortable dresser?
3	When you are reading novels, do you:	Like descriptive scenes; stop to imagine the scene; take little notice of pictures?	enjoy dialogue and conversation; "hear" the characters talk?	prefer action stories and are not a keen novel reader?
4	When you spell, do you:	Try to see the word?	use the phonetic approach?	write the word down to find if it "feels" right?
5	When you are angry, do you:	clam up, seethe, give others the "silent" treatment?	let others know quickly and express it in an outburst?	storm off, clench your fists, grit your teeth or grasp something tightly?

6	When you are free and have spare time, would you rather:	watch TV, go to the cinema or theatre, read?	listen to records or the radio, go to a concert or play an instrument?	do something physical (sport, DIY)?
7	When you forget something, do you:	forget names but remember faces?	forget faces but remember names?	Remember best what you did?
8	When you have to conduct business with another person, do you:	prefer face-to-face meeting or writing letters?	use the telephone?	talk it out during another activity (walking or having a meal)?
9	When you enjoy the arts, do you:	like paintings?	like music?	like dancing?
10	When you are talking, do you:	talk sparingly, but dislike listening for too long?	enjoy listening but are impatient to talk?	Gesture a lot and use expressive movements?
11	When you are at a meeting, do you:	come prepared with notes?	enjoy discussing issues and hearing other points of view?	want to be somewhere else and spend the time doodling?
12	When you are with others, might they interpret your emotions from your:	facial expressions?	voice quality?	General body tone?
13	When you visualize, do you:	see vivid detailed pictures?	think in sounds?	have few images that involve movement?
14	When you are concentrating, are you:	distracted by untidiness or movement?	distracted by sounds or noises?	Distracted by movement?
15	When you are praised, do you:	like written comments?	like oral comments?	like a physical action such as a pat on the back or a hug?
16	When you need to discipline a child, do you think the best approach is to:	temporarily isolate the child from the others?	reason with the child and discuss the situation?	use "acceptable" forms of corporal punishment (a smack)?

17	When you try to interpret someone's mood, do you:	primarily look at their facial expression?	listen to their tone of voice?	watch their body movements?
18	When you are inactive, do you:	look around, doodle, watch something?	talk to yourself or other people?	fidget?
19	When you are learning, do you:	like to see demonstrations, diagrams, slides, posters?	like verbal instructions, talks and lectures?	prefer direct involvement (activities, role-playing)?
20	When you go on a new, long journey, do you:	get the route from a book (AA/RAC guide)?	talk to someone to get the information?	get out maps, etc. and make a plan?
	TOTAL:	_____	_____	_____

1 I can remember something best if I say it aloud.

2 I prefer to follow written instructions rather than oral ones.

3 When studying, I like to chew gum, snack and/or play with something.

4 I remember things best when I see them written out.

5 I prefer to learn through simulations, games, and/or role playing.

6 I enjoy learning by having someone explain things to me.

7 I learn best from pictures, diagrams and charts

8 I enjoy working with my hands.

9 I enjoy reading, and I read quickly.

10 I prefer to listen to the news on the radio rather than read it in the newspaper.

11 I enjoy being near others. (I enjoy hugs, handshakes and touches.)

12 I listen to the radio, tapes and recordings.

13 When asked to spell a word, I simply see the word in my mind's eye.

14 When learning new material, I find myself sketching, drawing and doodling.

15 When I read silently, I say every word to myself.

Questionnaire 3

LEARNING CHANNELS INVENTORY

(Coderre, 2000)

Place the number 1, 2, or 3 on the line after each statement that best indicates your preference. **(Please use: 3 - Often; 2 - Sometimes; 1 - Seldom)**

In order to get an indication of your learning, preference, please add the numbers together for the following statements.

Visual Preference Score: 2 ___, 4 ___, 7 ___, 9 ___, 13 ___ = _____

Auditory Preference Score: 1___, 6 ___, 10 ___, 12 ___, 15 ___ = _____
K/T (Kinaesthetic/Tactual) Score: 3 ___, 5 ___, 8 ___,11 ___, 14 ___ = _____

The highest score indicates that my learning preference is _____.

Now that I know which is my dominant learning style, I can learn better by:

_____

_____

This inventory was developed by Max Coderre, publisher of ***Teaching Today Magazine*** *in Edmonton, Alberta, and is designed to help you better understand your own unique learning styles.*

Appendix 4

QUESTIONNAIRE

We would like to ask you about your own language learning experience and personal background. Your name will be kept confidential and the information you supply will help us provide a better service.

Answer the questions as fully as possible where necessary.

Name:_____ ; **Surname**: _____; **Date**: _____

A)

Sex: M - F **Age group**: 13-14; 15-16; 17-18; 19-25; over 25 (Circle only one group).

Have you studied English at school? How long: _____. (Specify number of years, terms, months, etc.).

Have you attended afternoon/evening courses? How long: _____.

Have you received private tutoring? How long: _____.

Have you ever been abroad in an English speaking country? How many times and how

long each time:_____.

Have you ever attended school in an English speaking country? How long: _____.

Have you ever lived in an English speaking country? How long:
_____.

What do you think your current level of English is? Elementary - Pre-intermediate -

Intermediate - Upper-intermediate - Advanced.

Besides English are you studying any other languages? Which one(s):_____.

Do you usually look for occasions to speak English? Yes: no.

Do you watch films in English? Yes; no.

Do you ever read English prose? Yes; no.

Are you satisfied with the instruction you have received in English so far? Yes; No.

If not, what would you like to change? Explain: _____
_____
_____
____

Are you studying English:

10) to pass the grade at school?
11) because your parents want you to?
12) because English is necessary nowadays?
13) to study abroad?
14) to understand English songs?
15) to get a good job in the future?

16) to travel abroad?
17) because you like it?
18) for personal improvement?

How long do you think it will take you to reach a satisfactory level in English?

Months___; Years___.

Can you see yourself thinking in English? Yes; No.

If this happens in the future, how long will it take? _____ (Give an approximate time).

As an English speaker, which dream would you like to see accomplished? Explain:

_____
__

_____
__

B)

Circle as appropriate: 1 = Strongly agree; 2 = agree; 3 = disagree; 4 = strongly disagree.

1. English is the most important language in the world 1 2 3 4 not sure

2. In my country people feel it is important to speak English 1 2 3 4 not sure

3. I think English will be useful for me to get a good job 1 2 3 4 not sure

4. I would like to be a teacher of English one day 1 2 3 4 not sure

5. I *mainly* want to learn English to travel and make friends 1 2 3 4 not sure

6. I have a talent for learning languages 1 2 3 4 not sure

7. I believe I will reach an advanced level of proficiency in English 1 2 3 4 not sure

8. It is necessary to know about English-speaking cultures to learn English well 1 2 3 4 not sure

9. The best way to learn English is to make use of opportunities to speak with native speakers of the language 1 2 3 4 not sure

10. It is useful to try things out in English even if we make mistakes 1 2 3 4 not sure

11. We can learn through making mistakes 1 2 3 4 not sure

12. Talking to other students in pairs and groups in class might lead

me to pick up their mistakes 1 2 3 4 not sure

13. I like the teacher to tell me all my mistakes 1 2 3 4 not sure

14. Learning by heart is a useful technique to learn a language for me 1 2 3 4 not sure

15. Translating from/into Spanish is a useful technique to learn a language for me 1 2 3 4 not sure

16. English as a language is: -- very difficult; -- difficult; -- moderately difficult; -- easy; -- very easy

17. The most difficult aspect of learning English for me is:

- speaking
- understanding
- reading
- writing
- pronounciation
- grammar
- vocabulay and idioms

18. **The most important part of learning English for me is:**

- speaking fluently
- speaking accurately
- understanding well in most situations
- reading fluently
- writing appropiately
- pronouncing well
- knowing lots of words and idioms
- knowing grammar well (from Nolan, 2000)

C)

In the following section tick the statement you most agree with. You may partially agree with both statements, in which case you tick both.

1. --- The teacher is an expert who passes on to students all he or she knows about the language.
2. --- The teacher is an expert who helps students discover their own most effective way of learning according to the students' needs.

3. --- The teacher should provide lots of opportunities for students to work on, discover and practice the language.
4. --- The teacher should explain grammar rules and present vocabulary systematically.

5. --- We learn about language in class as a preparation for using it in the real world later.
6. --- It is important to practice and use English in real-life situations in class as much as possible.

7. --- I expect to learn English from the teacher.
8. --- I think I can learn from other students in the class as well as the teacher.

9. --- I would like to be capable of planning and organizing my own learning with some help from the teacher.
10. --- I prefer the teacher to tell me what to learn.

11. --- I would like to be capable of evaluating my own progress in English.
12. --- I prefer the teacher to assess my progress.

13. --- It is the teacher's job to make lessons interesting and encourage me to learn.
14. --- I will learn more if I, the student, participate fully in class and take advantage of what learning opportunities arise.

(From Nolan, 2000)

D)

Based on your previous educational experiences, decide whether you mostly agree or disagree with each statement.

Yes No

1. When I work by myself in class, I usually concentrate better and learn more. ___ ___

2. When I work by myself in class, I often feel frustrated or bored. ___ ___

3. I prefer working with a group rather than with a partner. ___ ___

4. When I work with a partner or a small group in class instead of by myself, I often feel frustrated or like I am wasting time. ___ ___

5. Most of the time I would rather work with a single partner or in a small ___ ___ group than by myself.

6. Usually, I prefer my teacher to let us form our own group. ___ ___

7. I hope we will not do too much group work in this class. ___ ___

8. I hope we will have regular opportunities to work with a partner or a small ___ ___ group in this class.

From K. Kinsella and K. Sherak (1993)

E)

This part has been designed to help you and your teacher better understand the ways you prefer to learn. Again, think about your most recent school experiences while answering the following statements. Then, place a check mark (/) on the response line that most applies to you.

Usually Sometimes Rarely

1. I can remember most of the information I have heard in a lecture or class discussion without taking notes. _____ _____ _____

2. I learn more by reading about a topic than by listening to a lecture or a class discussion. _____ _____ _____

3. I learn more about a subject when I can use my hands to make or draw something. _____ _____ _____

4. When I study new material, I learn more easily by looking over visual aids in a chapter, such as charts and illustrations than by reading the assigned pages. _____ _____ _____

5. Talking about a subject with someone else helps me better understand my own ideas. _____ _____ _____

6. I take notes during class lectures and discussions and read them carefully several times before a test. _____ _____ _____

7. When I read a textbook, newspaper or novel, I picture the ideas or story in my mind. _____ _____ _____

8. I am skilled with my hands and can easily repair things or put things together. _____ _____ _____

9. I remember information that I have discussed in class with a partner or a small group better than information than I have read or written about. _____ _____ _____

10. I get confused when I try to figure out graphs and charts that do not come with a written explanation. _____ _____ _____

11. When I read, I underline or highlight ideas to make the

main idea stand out and to avoid getting distracted. _____ _____ _____

12. I remember information well by listening to tapes. _____ _____ _____

13. I am physically coordinated and do well at sports. _____ _____ _____

14. To remember a new word, I must hear it and say it. _____ _____ _____

15. I would rather see a film on a subject than listen to a lecture or read a book or magazine article. _____ _____ _____

16. I prefer reading a newspaper or magazine as a source of news rather than listening to the radio or watching television. _____ _____ _____

17. I make drawings in my study notes or on study cards to remember new vocabulary and important material. _____ _____ _____

18. I read assigned material and notes aloud to myself to concentrate and retain the information. _____ _____ ____

19. When I listen to an explanation or lecture, I form mental images or pictures to understand better. _____ _____ ____

20. When I am not sure how to spell a word, I write it in different

ways to see what looks most correct. _____ _____ _____

21. I best understand homework or test instructions by reading them on the board or on a handout rather than by just listening to them. _____ _____ _____

22. It is easy for me to remember illustrations and charts in textbooks if they are done in bright colours. _____ _____ ____

23. I prefer to watch television or listen to the radio for news rather than reading a newspaper or a magazine. _____ _____ ____

24. I understand and remember more about a subject from a field trip than from a lecture or a textbook. _____ _____ ____

25. To remember a new word I must see it several times. _____ _____ ____

26. Before making or drawing something, I first picture in my mind what my completed project will look like. _____ _____ ____

27. I find it difficult to figure out what to do on homework

assignments when the teacher just gives us a handout without discussing it in class. _____ _____ ____

28. I write or draw without listening to a lecture or a class discussion in order to concentrate and not get restless. _____ _____ ____

29. I have difficulty understanding a new term if I have only a definition with no picture or drawing to accompany it. _____ _____ _____

30. I regularly read newspapers, magazines or books for pleasure and information. _____ _____ _____

31. When I am learning about a new subject, I get interested and remember much more if I can have "hands-on" experience such as drawing, building a model, or doing a lab experiment. _____ _____ _____

32. When I have homework reading assignments, I take notes or summerize the main idea in writing. _____ _____ _____

(from Kate Kinsella, 1993)

Appendix 5A

Strategies for the FCE Reading Paper

Name……. Surnames…….

The following is a list of strategies proposed to help you in the execution of the parts of this paper. If you use any of the strategies listed below, choose an option among: *hardly ever, sometimes, often* and *always*. The strategies you choose can be used as reference points to enhance your reading skills.

Part 1

Strategies

	Hardly ever	sometimes	Often	Always
1. I read the instructions carefully.				
2. I read as widely as I can in English, both fiction and non-fiction.				
3. I am aware that the multiple-choice questions are presented in the same order as the information in the text.				
4. I read the text before reading the questions.				
5. I read the text quickly for a first overall impression.				
6. I answer the questions by making constant and close reference to the text.				
7. I must remember that if a part 1 multiple choice question is an incomplete sentence, the whole sentence must match the text, not just the phrases presented as A, B, C or D. The information in these options may be true in itself, but not work with the sentence *beginning* I am given.				
8. I can actually identify and mark the paragraph and the area where the answer to the question is contained.				

9. I help myself with highlighter pens and by underlining key words and concepts.				
10. Once I've found the spot where the answer is I practice intensive reading paying attention to details.				
11. I use clues like the title, the instructions or any linguistic and non-linguistic clues to help myself understand what the text is about.				

Part 2

Strategies

	Hardly ever	Some times	Often	Always
12. I gain an overall idea by reading the gapped text first. I focus on the text as a whole.				
13. I carefully notice the information and ideas that come before and after each gap as well as throughout the whole of the gapped paragraph.				
14. I pay close attention to the words and phrases indicating time, cause and effect, exemplification, contrasting arguments, pronouns, repetition, use of verb tenses, etc.				
15. I read through part 2 after making my choices to check that everything makes sense.				
16. I do not choose my answer too quickly in part 2. I only start to look at the extracts when I have a good idea of what the main text is about.				
17. I fill in what I think are the easy gaps first in part 2, and leave the problem areas until last.				
18. I think about the text before and after each gap and try to think what's missing.				
19. I cross out the choices I have made once I am sure they are the right ones.				
20. I read and re-read my answer in this part of the test and I'm prepared to change my mind.				
21. I'm aware that I don't need to know the exact meaning of every word to do a good exam.				
22. When I'm finished, I read through this part and I check that everything makes sense. I check that linking words, tenses and time references all fit with the choices I have made.				

Part 3

Strategies

	Hardly ever	Some times	Often	Always
23. I read the questions first; then, I read the texts.				
24. I make sure that I choose the correct option(s) when I find similar information in different sections of the text in 3				
25. I train to read for specific information.				
26. I scan and skim the text first.				
27. I look for sections of the text which are close in meaning to the wording of the questions.				
28. I don't choose an answer simply because similar vocabulary is used.				
29. I underline key words that can help me identify the main idea in the questions and in the texts.				
30. I practice different types of reading (superficial, reading for specific information, reading for details and intensive reading) in order to improve my reading skills.				
31. I practice paraphrasing sentences.				
32. When I learn new words and expressions I also look for synonyms and antonyms.				

Footnote: if you're using other strategies different from the ones listed above and below, you can write them in the spaces provided

Appendix 5B

Strategies for FCE Paper 3

(Use of English)

Name …….

Surname…….

The following is a list of strategies proposed to help you in the execution of the four parts of the *Use of English* paper. If you use any of the strategies listed below, choose an option among: *hardly ever, sometimes, often* or *always.* You may find that the employment of a few or many of these strategies can help you enhance your skills in the use of English grammar.

Strategy Description	Hardly ever	Some times	Ofte n	Always
Part 1				
1. In preparing for the Use of English paper I learn not just single words but whole phrases.				
2. I read the title of the passage in order to predict what I am going to read.				
3. I practice with vocabulary to bring out the difference in meaning between similar words.				
4. I also practice grammatical pattern and collocation as an important part of knowing the meaning.				
5. I read the text through quickly, jumping the gaps, in order to become familiar with the subject matter and style.				
6. I read the title of the passage in order to predict what I am going to read.				
Part 2				
7. I never leave any blank spaces unfilled.				
8. First, I fill in the words I'm sure of.				
9. I look at the title of the passage.				

10. If I don't understand the title I read the first few opening lines to make out the content of the text.				
11. Before trying to fill in the blank spaces, I first read the passage quickly to get an idea of the content.				
12. I know that the answer will always be <u>one</u> word.				
13. The words to fill in will focus more on grammar and structure and less on vocabulary.				
14. I pay close attention to how words and ideas are linked.				
15. When deciding which word to choose, I look at the words that comes *before* and *after* the blank space and ask myself: Do I need a noun, an adverb, a preposition, an article, a link word, etc. or part of a phrasal verb?				
	Hardly ever	Some times	often	Alw ays
Part 3				
16. I never leave any blank spaces unfilled.				
17. I always check that the words are spelled correctly.				
18. When I've filled in each word, I re-read the passage to see if it makes sense.				
19. In preparing for this part I practice with word-building.				
20. I am aware that word-building involves not just the addition of affixes, but also internal changes and compounding.				
21. I develop a systematic and methodical approach to these different types of word formation.				
22. I keep a notebook where I write familiar words and practice transforming them from nouns to verbs, adjective, adverbs, etc and vice versa.				
23. I ask the teacher for the meaning of unfamiliar words.				
24. I keep a dictionary handy to check the meaning and 25. spelling of words.				
26. I write sentences and make examples with the new words I come across.				
27. I practice combining words to come up with a new meaning.				
28. I break down long words to figure out their meaning.				

Part 4				
29. I am aware that I need to master a wide range of structures such as reported speech, passive voice, conditionals, verb tenses as well as modal verbs.				
30. I know that I have to insert the word given in my answer.				
31. I know that I cannot change the word given.				
32. I also know that I cannot write more than five words in the given space.				
33. I know that I need to develop an awareness of parallel and synonymous expressions during my training.				
34. I ask my teacher for extra material to train for this part.				
35. I make sure that I train extensively to prepare for this part.				
36. I try to find out the rule(s) behind a given structure.				
37. I practice writing sentences with different words but with similar meaning.				

Appendix 5C

Strategies for FCE Paper 4

(Listening test)

Name ……..

Surname…….

The following is a list of strategies proposed to help you in the execution of the four parts of the Listening Paper. If you use any of the strategies listed below, chose an option among: *hardly ever, sometimes, often or always*. You may find that the employment of a few or many of these strategies can help you enhance your listening skills.

Part 1

Strategy description	*Hardly ever*	*Some Times*	*Often*	*Always*
1. I practice by listening to short extracts of speech and concentrating on understanding the general idea or main points of what I hear.				
2. I read the questions on the question paper to help predict what I will hear.				
3. I hear as much spoken English as possible.				
4. I hear as much variety of English as possible.				
5. I listen to English music and watch English films whenever I have the opportunity.				
6. I look for opportunities to listen to English outside the classroom				
Part 2				
7. I write my answers as clearly as possible; I even use capital letters if it's necessary.				
8. I check that my idea of what the correct answer is when I hear the recording the first time is confirmed when I hear it the second time.				
9. I use the information on the question paper to help myself follow the oral text.				
10. I carefully look at what is printed *before* and *after* the gap and try to anticipate the kind of information that I'll be listening for.				
11. I only write the missing information and use only the necessary words.				
12. I don't rephrase the words or expressions I hear; I write down the figure(s) or word(s) as they are spoken.				
13. I don't spend too much time on a question that I'm having difficulty with, as I know that I might miss the				

next question.				
14. I answer all the questions, even if I am not very sure of the answer.				
15. I don't complicate my answer by writing irrelevant data.				
Part 3				
16. I listen and read the instructions carefully.				
17. I make sure I understand what I have to do.				
18. I use the time allowed before hearing each recording to read through all the questions.				
19. I first write down the answers I am sure of, knowing that any wrong answers in this part may affect the other answers.				
20. I concentrate on understanding in as much depth as possible what speakers say.				
21. I don't let individual words or expressions distract me from the main idea of the text.				
22. I answer all the questions.				
23. I am prepared to change my answer on the second listening when I am not sure of the answer I've written.				
Part 4				
24. I write the names or the initials of the speakers on the question paper to help identify them in this part.				
25. I mark those answers I'm sure of on the first listening.				
26. I underline the key words on the question paper.				
27. If I have difficulty with one question I leave it and concentrate on the next one.				

Appendix 5 D

Strategies for the CAE Reading Paper

Name……. Surnames…….

The following is a list of strategies proposed to help you in the execution of the parts of this paper. If you use any of the strategies listed below, choose an option among: *hardly ever, sometimes, often* and *always*. The strategies you choose can be used as reference points to enhance your reading skills.

Part 1 +3

Strategies

	Hardly ever	Sometimes	Often	Always
1. I read the instructions carefully.				
2. I read as widely as I can in English, both fiction and non-fiction.				
3. I am aware that the multiple-choice questions are presented in the same order as the information in the text.				
4. I read the text before reading the questions.				
5. I read the text quickly for a first overall impression.				
6. I answer the questions by making constant and close reference to the text.				
7. I must remember that if a part 1 multiple choice question is an incomplete sentence, the whole sentence must match the text, not just the phrases presented as A, B, C or D. The information in these options may be true in itself, but not work with the sentence *beginning* I am given.				
8. I can actually identify and mark the paragraph and the area where the answer to the question is contained.				
9. I help myself with highlighter pens and by underlining key words and concepts.				
10. Once I've found the spot where the answer is I practice intensive reading paying attention to details.				
11. I use clues like the title, the instructions or any linguistic and non-linguistic clues to help myself understand what the text is about.				

Part 2

Strategies

	Hardly ever	Some times	Often	Always
33. I gain an overall idea by reading the gapped text first. I focus on the text as a whole.				
34. I carefully notice the information and ideas that come before and after each gap as well as throughout the whole of the gapped paragraph.				
35. I pay close attention to the words and phrases indicating time, cause and effect, exemplification, contrasting arguments, pronouns, repetition, use of				

verb tenses, etc.				
36. I read through part 2 after making my choices to check that everything makes sense.				
37. I do not choose my answer too quickly in part 2. I only start to look at the extracts when I have a good idea of what the main text is about.				
38. I fill in what I think are the easy gaps first in part 2, and leave the problem areas until last.				
39. I think about the text before and after each gap and try to think what's missing.				
40. I cross out the choices I have made once I am sure they are the right ones.				
41. I read and re-read my answer in this part of the test and I'm prepared to change my mind.				
42. I'm aware that I don't need to know the exact meaning of every word to do a good exam.				
43. When I'm finished, I read through this part and I check that everything makes sense. I check that linking words, tenses and time references all fit with the choices I have made.				

Part 4

Strategies

	Hardly ever	Some times	Often	Always
44. I read the questions first; then, I read the texts.				
45. I make sure that I choose the correct option(s) when I find similar information in different sections of the text in 3				
46. I train to read for specific information.				
47. I look for sections of the text which are close in meaning to the wording of the questions.				
48. I don't choose an answer simply because similar vocabulary is used.				
49. I underline key words that can help me identify the main idea in the questions and in the texts.				
50. I practice different types of reading (superficial, reading for specific information, reading for details and intensive reading) in order to improve my reading skills.				
51. I practice paraphrasing sentences.				
52. When I learn new words and expressions I also look for synonyms and antonyms.				

Footnote: if you're using other strategies different from the ones listed above and below, you can write them in the spaces provided

Appendix 5E

Strategies for CAE Paper 3

(Use of English)

Name ……..

Surname……..

The following is a list of strategies proposed to help you in the execution of the four parts of the *Use of English* paper. If you use any of the strategies listed below, choose an option among: *hardly ever, sometimes, often* or *always.* You may find that the employment of a few or many of these strategies can help you enhance your skills in the use of English grammar.

Strategy Description	Hardly ever	Sometimes	Often	Always
Part 1				
1. In preparing for the Use of English paper I learn not jus single words but whole phrases.				

2. I read the title of the passage in order to predict what I am going to read.				
3. I practice with vocabulary to bring out the difference in meaning between similar words.				
4. I also practice grammatical pattern and collocation as an important part of knowing the meaning.				
5. I read the text through quickly, jumping the gaps, in order to become familiar with the subject matter and style.				
6. I make sure I read the instructions carefully.				
Part 2				
7. I never leave any blank spaces unfilled.				
8. First, I fill in the words I'm sure of.				
9. I look at the title of the passage.				
10. If I don't understand the title I read the first few opening lines to make out the content of the text.				
11. Before trying to fill in the blank spaces, I first read the passage quickly to get an idea of the content.				
12. I know that the answer will always be <u>one</u> word.				
13. The words to fill in will focus more on grammar and structure and less on vocabulary.				
14. I pay close attention to how words and ideas are linked.				
15. When deciding which word to choose, I look at the words that comes *before* and *after* the blank space and ask myself: Do I need a noun, an adverb, a preposition, an article, a link word, etc. or part of a phrasal verb?				
	Hardly ever	Some times	often	Alw ays
Part 3				
16. I never leave any blank spaces unfilled.				
17. I always check that the words are spelled correctly.				

18. When I've filled in each word, I re-read the passage to see if it makes sense.				
19. In preparing for this part I practice with word-building.				
20. I am aware that word-building involves not just the addition of affixes, but also internal changes and compounding.				
21. I develop a systematic and methodical approach to these different types of word formation.				
22. I keep a notebook where I write familiar words and practice transforming them from nouns to verbs, adjective, adverbs, etc and vice versa.				
23. I ask the teacher for the meaning of unfamiliar words.				
24. I keep a dictionary handy to check the meaning and 25. spelling of words.				
26. I write sentences and make examples with the new words I come across.				
27. I practice combining words to come up with a new meaning.				
28. I break down long words to figure out their meaning.				
Part 4				
29. I am aware that I need to master a wide range of structures such as reported speech, passive voice, conditionals, verb tenses as well as modal verbs.				
30. I know that I have to insert the word given in my answer.				
31. I know that I cannot change the word given.				
32. I also know that I cannot write more than six words in the given space.				
33. I know that I need to develop an awareness of parallel and synonymous expressions during my training.				
34. I ask my teacher for extra material to train for this part.				
35. I make sure that I train extensively to prepare for this part.				
36. I try to find out the rule(s) behind a given structure.				
37. I practice writing sentences with different words but with similar meaning.				

Appendix 5 F

Strategies for Paper 4

(CAE Listening test)

Name ……..

Surname…….

The following is a list of strategies proposed to help you in the execution of the four parts of the Listening Paper. If you use any of the strategies listed below, chose an option among: *hardly ever, sometimes, often or always*. You may find that the employment of a few or many of these strategies can help you enhance your listening skills.

Part 1

Strategy description	*Hardly ever*	*Some Times*	*Often*	*Always*
1. I practice by listening to short extracts of speech and concentrating on understanding the general idea or main points of what I hear.				
2. I read the questions on the question paper to help predict what I will hear.				
3. I underline the key ideas.				
4. I listen to the whole idea before making my choice.				
5. I hear as much spoken English as possible.				
6. I hear as much variety of English as possible.				
7. I listen to English music and watch English films whenever I have the opportunity.				
8. I look for opportunities to listen to English outside the classroom				
Part 2				
9. I write my answers as clearly as possible; I even use capital letters if it's necessary.				
10. I check that my idea of what the correct answer is when I hear the recording the first time is confirmed				

when I hear it the second time.				
11. I use the information on the question paper to help myself follow the oral text.				
12. I carefully look at what is printed *before* and *after* the gap and try to anticipate the kind of information that I'll be listening for.				
13. I only write the missing information and use only the necessary words.				
14. I don't rephrase the words or expressions I hear; I write down the figure(s) or word(s) as they are spoken.				
15. I don't spend too much time on a question that I'm having difficulty with, as I know that I might miss the next question.				
16. I answer all the questions, even if I am not very sure of the answer.				
17. I don't complicate my answer by writing irrelevant data.				
Part 3				
18. I listen and read the instructions carefully.				
19. I make sure I understand what I have to do.				
20. I use the time allowed before hearing each recording to read through all the questions.				
21. I first write down the answers I am sure of, knowing that any wrong answers in this part may affect the other answers.				
22. I concentrate on understanding in as much depth as possible what speakers say.				
23. I don't let individual words or expressions distract me from the main idea of the text.				
24. I answer all the questions.				
25. I am prepared to change my answer on the second listening when I am not sure of the answer I've written.				
Part 4				
26. I write the names or the initials of the speakers on the question paper to help identify them in this part.				

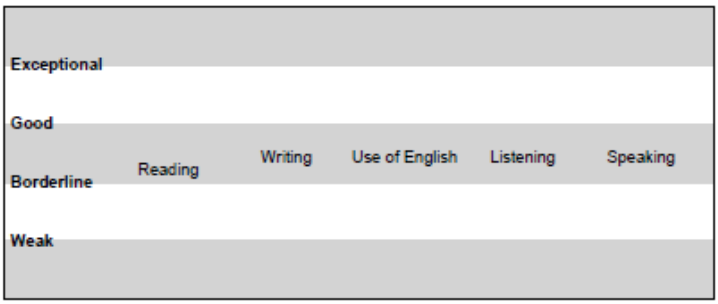
27. I mark those answers I'm sure of on the first listening.				
28. I underline the key words on the question paper.				
29. If I have difficulty with one question I leave it and concentrate on the next one.				
30. I know I have two tasks to do.				
31. I know I may hear the answer to the second task before the answer to the first task.				

To be quoted on all correspondence

Place of Entry
MADRID

Qualification	Score	Result
CERTIFICATE IN ADVANCED ENGLISH	64/100	PASS AT GRADE C

Candidate Profile



The **Certificate in Advanced English (CAE)** is a general proficiency examination at Level C1 in the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference. It is at Level 2 in the UK National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

CEFR Level	NQF Level	Examination
C2	3	Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE)
C1	**2**	**Certificate in Advanced English (CAE)**
B2	1	First Certificate in English (FCE)
B1	Entry 3	Preliminary English Test (PET)
A2	Entry 2	Key English Test (KET)
A1	Entry 1	

Results	Score
Pass at Grade A	80 to 100
Pass at Grade B	75 to 79
Pass at Grade C	60 to 74
Level B2	45 to 59
Fail	0 to 44

Other

X – the candidate was absent from part of the examination

Z – the candidate was absent from all parts of the examination

Pending – a result cannot be issued at present, but will follow in due course

Withheld – the candidate should contact their centre for information

Interpretation of results
Grade C covers the range of ability from a borderline pass to good achievement at the level. **Grade B** indicates the range of good achievement up to **Grade A**, which demonstrates an ability at Council of Europe Level C2. **Level B2** covers the range of ability between weak and borderline.

The total number of marks available in the examination is 200. Marks out of 200 are converted to a standardised score out of 100.

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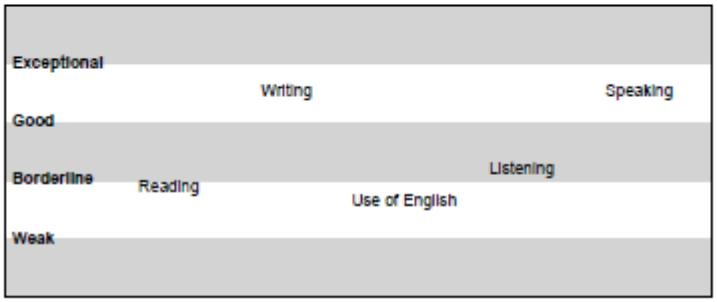
ESOL Examinations

29/07/2011

correspondence	Place of Entry
	MADRID

Qualification	Score	Result
FIRST CERTIFICATE IN ENGLISH	**65/100**	**PASS AT GRADE C**

Candidate Profile



The **First Certificate in English (FCE)** is a general proficiency examination at Level B2 in the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference. It is at Level 1 in the UK National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

CEFR Level	NQF Level	Examination
C2	3	Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE)
C1	2	Certificate in Advanced English (CAE)
B2	**1**	**First Certificate in English (FCE)**
B1	Entry 3	Preliminary English Test (PET)
A2	Entry 2	Key English Test (KET)
A1	Entry 1	

Results	Score
Pass at Grade A	80 to 100
Pass at Grade B	75 to 79
Pass at Grade C	60 to 74
Level B1	45 to 59
Fail	0 to 44

Other

X – the candidate was absent from part of the examination

Z – the candidate was absent from all parts of the examination

Pending – a result cannot be issued at present, but will follow in due course

Withheld – the candidate should contact their centre for information

Interpretation of results
Grade C covers the range of ability from a borderline pass to good achievement at the level. **Grade B** indicates the range of good achievement up to **Grade A**, which demonstrates an ability at Council of Europe Level C1. **Level B1** covers the range of ability between weak and borderline.

The total number of marks available in the examination is 200. Marks out of 200 are converted to a standardised score out of 100.

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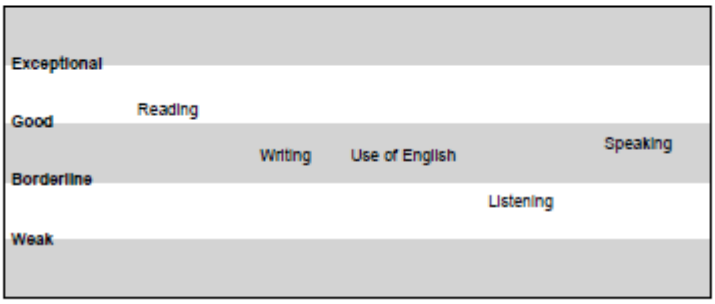
To be quoted on all correspondence	Place of Entry
	MADRID

Qualification	Score	Result
FIRST CERTIFICATE IN ENGLISH	**66/100**	**PASS AT GRADE C**

Candidate Profile



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CEFR Level	NQF Level	Examination
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Interpretation of results
Grade C covers the range of ability from a borderline pass to good achievement at the level. **Grade B** indicates the range of good achievement up to **Grade A**, which demonstrates an ability at Council of Europe Level C1. **Level B1** covers the range of ability between weak and borderline.

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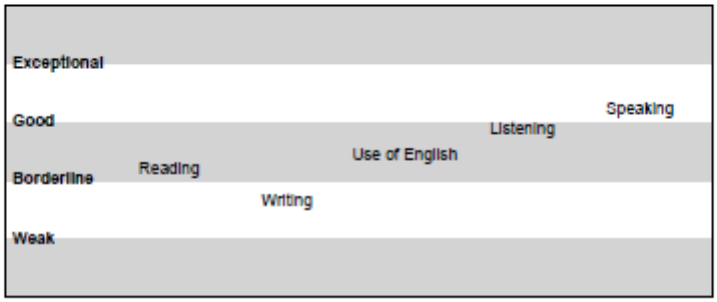
ESOL Examinations

29/07/2011

To be quoted on all correspondence	Place of Entry
	MADRID

Qualification	Score	Result
FIRST CERTIFICATE IN ENGLISH	**66/100**	**PASS AT GRADE C**

Candidate Profile



The **First Certificate in English (FCE)** is a general proficiency examination at Level B2 in the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference. It is at Level 1 in the UK National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

CEFR Level	NQF Level	Examination
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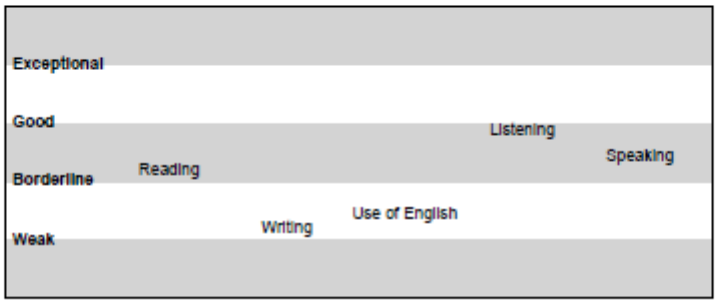
To be quoted on all correspondence	Place of Entry
	MADRID

Qualification	Score	Result
FIRST CERTIFICATE IN ENGLISH	**59/100**	**COUNCIL OF EUROPE LEVEL B1**

Candidate Profile



The **First Certificate in English (FCE)** is a general proficiency examination at Level B2 in the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference. It is at Level 1 in the UK National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

CEFR Level	NQF Level	Examination
C2	3	Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE)
C1	2	Certificate in Advanced English (CAE)
B2	**1**	**First Certificate in English (FCE)**
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Fail	0 to 44

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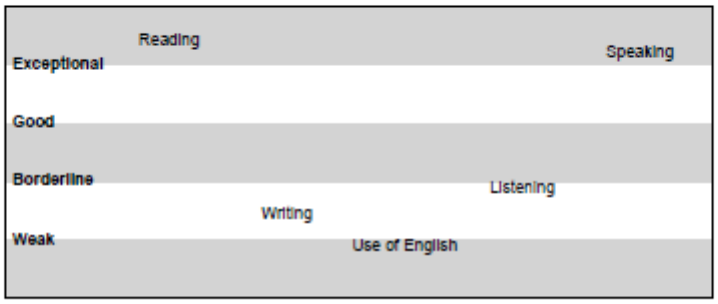
To be quoted on all correspondence	Place of Entry
	MADRID

Qualification	Score	Result
FIRST CERTIFICATE IN ENGLISH	**64/100**	**PASS AT GRADE C**

Candidate Profile



The **First Certificate in English (FCE)** is a general proficiency examination at Level B2 in the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference. It is at Level 1 in the UK National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

CEFR Level	NQF Level	Examination
C2	3	Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE)
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B1	Entry 3	Preliminary English Test (PET)
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Results	Score
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To be quoted on all correspondence

Place of Entry
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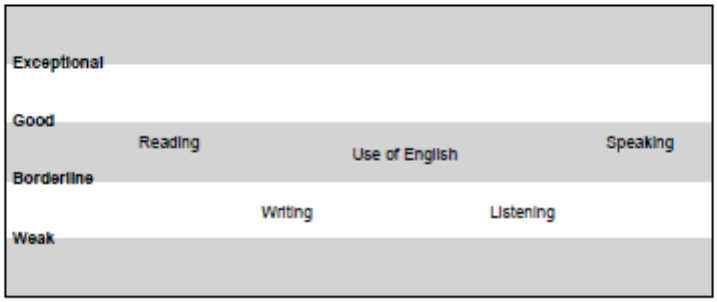
Qualification	Score	Result
FIRST CERTIFICATE IN ENGLISH	**61/100**	**PASS AT GRADE C**

Candidate Profile



The **First Certificate in English (FCE)** is a general proficiency examination at Level B2 in the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference. It is at Level 1 in the UK National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

CEFR Level	NQF Level	Examination
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B1	Entry 3	Preliminary English Test (PET)
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Results	Score
Pass at Grade A	80 to 100
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Pass at Grade C	60 to 74
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Fail	0 to 44

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Interpretation of results
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ESOL Examinations

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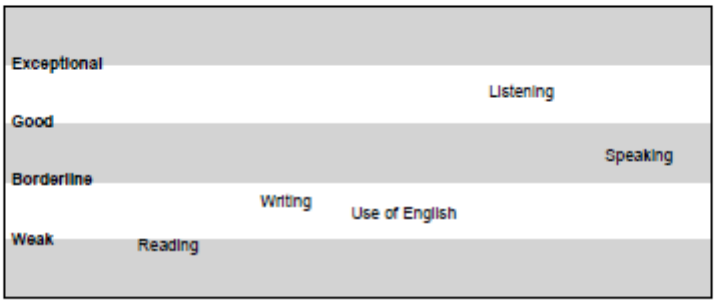
To be quoted on all correspondence

Place of Entry
MADRID

Qualification	Score	Result
FIRST CERTIFICATE IN ENGLISH	**57/100**	**COUNCIL OF EUROPE LEVEL B1**

Candidate Profile



The **First Certificate in English (FCE)** is a general proficiency examination at Level B2 in the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference. It is at Level 1 in the UK National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

CEFR Level	NQF Level	Examination
C2	3	Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE)
C1	2	Certificate in Advanced English (CAE)
B2	**1**	**First Certificate in English (FCE)**
B1	Entry 3	Preliminary English Test (PET)
A2	Entry 2	Key English Test (KET)
A1	Entry 1	

Results	Score
Pass at Grade A	80 to 100
Pass at Grade B	75 to 79
Pass at Grade C	60 to 74
Level B1	45 to 59
Fail	0 to 44

Other

X – the candidate was absent from part of the examination

Z – the candidate was absent from all parts of the examination

Pending – a result cannot be issued at present, but will follow in due course

Withheld – the candidate should contact their centre for information

Interpretation of results
Grade C covers the range of ability from a borderline pass to good achievement at the level. **Grade B** indicates the range of good achievement up to **Grade A**, which demonstrates an ability at Council of Europe Level C1. **Level B1** covers the range of ability between weak and borderline.

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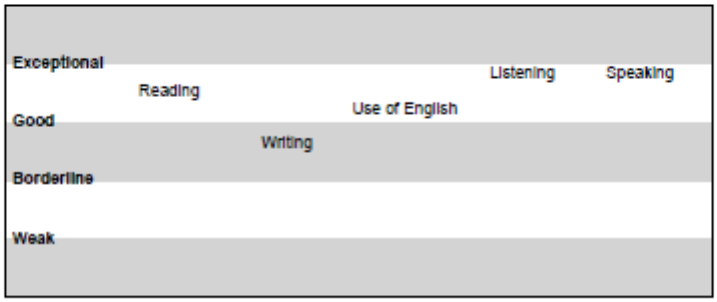
To be quoted on all correspondence	Place of Entry
	MADRID

Qualification	Score	Result
FIRST CERTIFICATE IN ENGLISH	**76/100**	**PASS AT GRADE B**

Candidate Profile



The **First Certificate in English (FCE)** is a general proficiency examination at Level B2 in the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference. It is at Level 1 in the UK National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

CEFR Level	NQF Level	Examination
C2	3	Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE)
C1	2	Certificate in Advanced English (CAE)
B2	**1**	**First Certificate in English (FCE)**
B1	Entry 3	Preliminary English Test (PET)
A2	Entry 2	Key English Test (KET)
A1	Entry 1	

Results	Score
Pass at Grade A	80 to 100
Pass at Grade B	75 to 79
Pass at Grade C	60 to 74
Level B1	45 to 59
Fail	0 to 44

Other

X – the candidate was absent from part of the examination

Z – the candidate was absent from all parts of the examination

Pending – a result cannot be issued at present, but will follow in due course

Withheld – the candidate should contact their centre for information

Interpretation of results
Grade C covers the range of ability from a borderline pass to good achievement at the level. **Grade B** indicates the range of good achievement up to **Grade A**, which demonstrates an ability at Council of Europe Level C1. **Level B1** covers the range of ability between weak and borderline.

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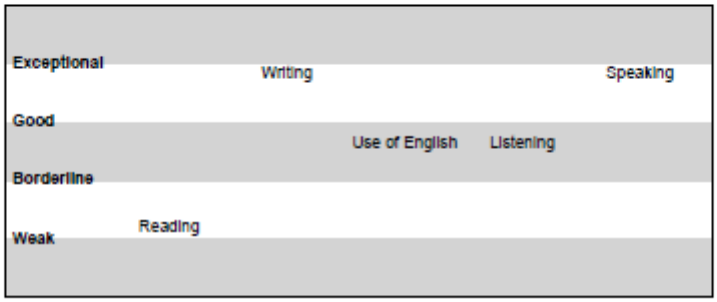
29/07/2011

To be quoted on all correspondence	Place of Entry
	MADRID

Qualification	Score	Result
FIRST CERTIFICATE IN ENGLISH	**68/100**	**PASS AT GRADE C**

Candidate Profile



The **First Certificate in English (FCE)** is a general proficiency examination at Level B2 in the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference. It is at Level 1 in the UK National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

CEFR Level	NQF Level	Examination
C2	3	Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE)
C1	2	Certificate in Advanced English (CAE)
B2	**1**	**First Certificate in English (FCE)**
B1	Entry 3	Preliminary English Test (PET)
A2	Entry 2	Key English Test (KET)
A1	Entry 1	

Results	Score
Pass at Grade A	80 to 100
Pass at Grade B	75 to 79
Pass at Grade C	60 to 74
Level B1	45 to 59
Fail	0 to 44

Other

X – the candidate was absent from part of the examination

Z – the candidate was absent from all parts of the examination

Pending – a result cannot be issued at present, but will follow in due course

Withheld – the candidate should contact their centre for information

Interpretation of results

Grade C covers the range of ability from a borderline pass to good achievement at the level. **Grade B** indicates the range of good achievement up to **Grade A**, which demonstrates an ability at Council of Europe Level C1. **Level B1** covers the range of ability between weak and borderline.

The total number of marks available in the examination is 200. Marks out of 200 are converted to a standardised score out of 100.

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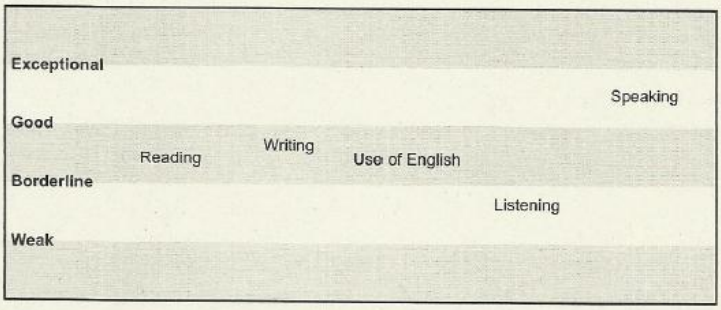
29/07/2011

To be quoted on all correspondence

Place of Entry
MADRID

Qualification	Score	Grade	Result
FIRST CERTIFICATE IN ENGLISH	**68/100**	**C**	**PASS**

Candidate Profile



The **First Certificate in English (FCE)** is a general proficiency examination at Level B2 in the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). It is at Level 1 in the UK National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

CEFR Level	NQF Level	Examination
C2	3	Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE)
C1	2	Certificate in Advanced English (CAE)
B2	**1**	**First Certificate in English (FCE)**
B1	Entry 3	Preliminary English Test (PET)
A2	Entry 2	Key English Test (KET)
A1	Entry 1	

Passing Grades	Score
A	80 to 100
B	75 to 79
C	60 to 74
Failing Grades	
D	55 to 59
E	0 to 54

Interpretation of overall grades
Grade C covers the range of ability from a borderline pass to good achievement at the level. **Grade B** indicates the range of good achievement up to **Grade A**, which indicates a very strong performance at the level. **Grade D** is a narrow fail.

The total number of marks available in the examination is 200. Marks out of 200 are converted to a standardised score out of 100.

Other

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Z – the candidate was absent from all parts of the examination

Pending – a result cannot be issued at present, but will follow in due course

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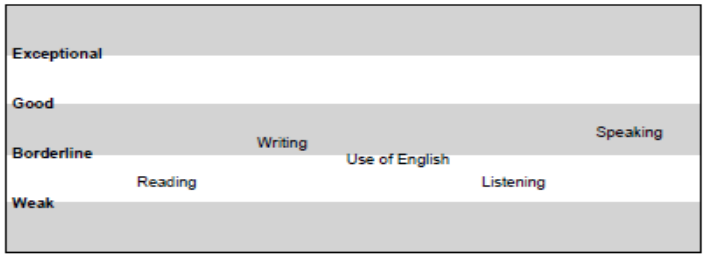
ESOL Examinations

22/10/2010

To be quoted on all correspondence	Place of Entry
	MADRID

Qualification	Score	Result
CERTIFICATE IN ADVANCED ENGLISH	56/100	COUNCIL OF EUROPE LEVEL B2

Candidate Profile



The **Certificate in Advanced English (CAE)** is a general proficiency examination at Level C1 in the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference. It is at Level 2 in the UK National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

CEFR Level	NQF Level	Examination
C2	3	Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE)
C1	**2**	**Certificate in Advanced English (CAE)**
B2	1	First Certificate in English (FCE)
B1	Entry 3	Preliminary English Test (PET)
A2	Entry 2	Key English Test (KET)
A1	Entry 1	

Results	Score
Pass at Grade A	80 to 100
Pass at Grade B	75 to 79
Pass at Grade C	60 to 74
Level B2	45 to 59
Fail	0 to 44

Other

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Z – the candidate was absent from all parts of the examination

Pending – a result cannot be issued at present, but will follow in due course

Withheld – the candidate should contact their centre for information

Interpretation of results
Grade C covers the range of ability from a borderline pass to good achievement at the level. **Grade B** indicates the range of good achievement up to **Grade A**, which demonstrates an ability at Council of Europe Level C2. **Level B2** covers the range of ability between weak and borderline.

The total number of marks available in the examination is 200. Marks out of 200 are converted to a standardised score out of 100.

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29/07/2011

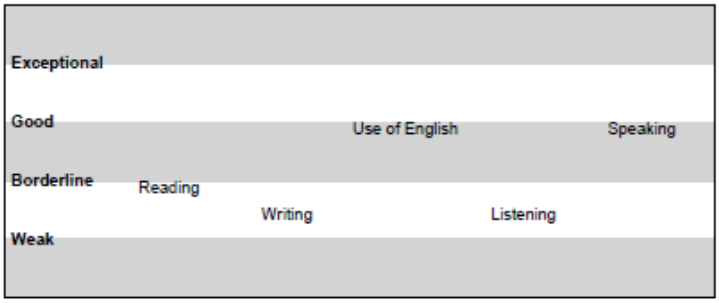
Appendix 6 P13

To be quoted on all correspondence

Place of Entry
MADRID

Qualification	Score	Result
CERTIFICATE IN ADVANCED ENGLISH	62/100	PASS AT GRADE C

Candidate Profile



The **Certificate in Advanced English (CAE)** is a general proficiency examination at Level C1 in the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference. It is at Level 2 in the UK National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

CEFR Level	NQF Level	Examination
C2	3	Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE)
C1	**2**	**Certificate in Advanced English (CAE)**
B2	1	First Certificate in English (FCE)
B1	Entry 3	Preliminary English Test (PET)
A2	Entry 2	Key English Test (KET)
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Results	Score
Pass at Grade A	80 to 100
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Level B2	45 to 59
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ESOL Examinations

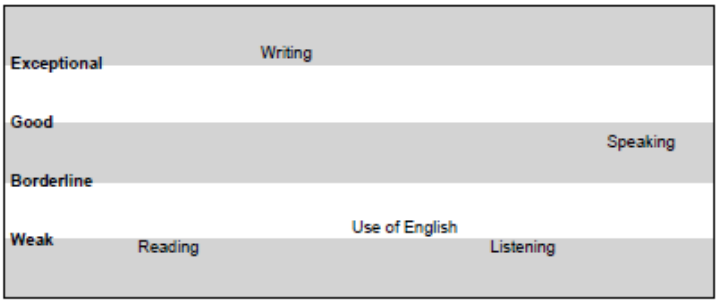
29/07/2011

To be quoted on all correspondence

Place of Entry
MADRID

Qualification	Score	Result
CERTIFICATE IN ADVANCED ENGLISH	55/100	COUNCIL OF EUROPE LEVEL B2

Candidate Profile



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B1	Entry 3	Preliminary English Test (PET)
A2	Entry 2	Key English Test (KET)
A1	Entry 1	

Results	Score
Pass at Grade A	80 to 100
Pass at Grade B	75 to 79
Pass at Grade C	60 to 74
Level B2	45 to 59
Fail	0 to 44

Other

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Place of Entry
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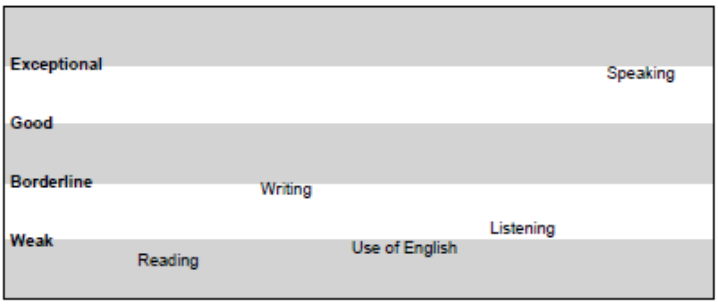
Qualification	Score	Result
CERTIFICATE IN ADVANCED ENGLISH	49/100	COUNCIL OF EUROPE LEVEL B2

Candidate Profile



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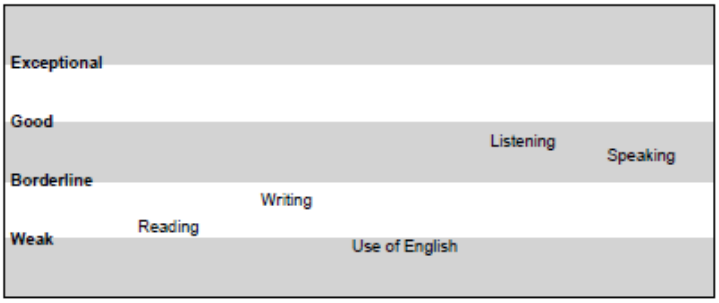

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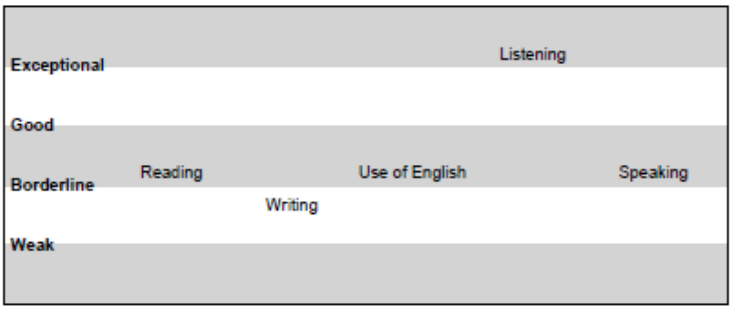
To be quoted on all correspondence	Place of Entry
	MADRID

Qualification	Score	Result
CERTIFICATE IN ADVANCED ENGLISH	65/100	PASS AT GRADE C

Candidate Profile



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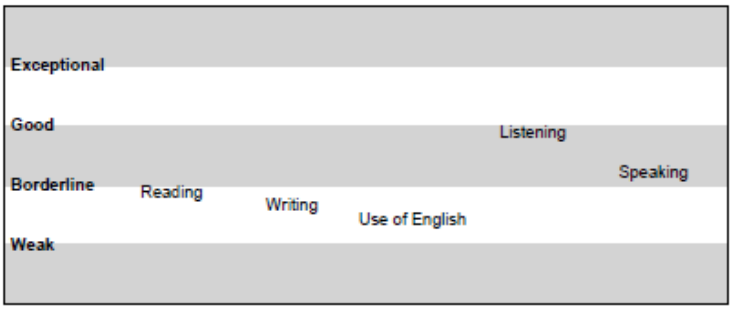
	MADRID

Qualification	Score	Result
CERTIFICATE IN ADVANCED ENGLISH	60/100	PASS AT GRADE C

Candidate Profile



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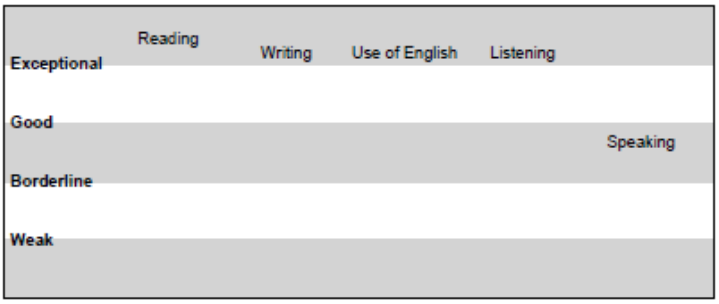
Qualification	Score	Result
CERTIFICATE IN ADVANCED ENGLISH	80/100	PASS AT GRADE A

Candidate Profile



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Place of Entry
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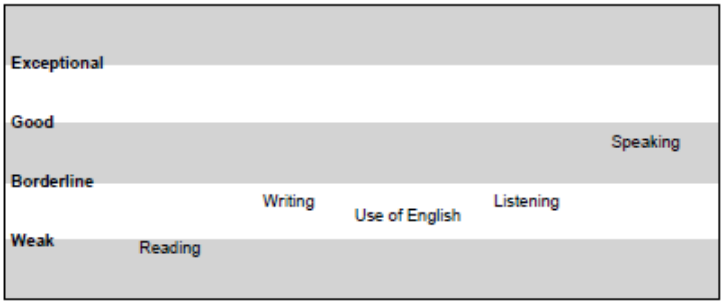
Qualification	Score	Result
CERTIFICATE IN ADVANCED ENGLISH	54/100	COUNCIL OF EUROPE LEVEL B2

Candidate Profile



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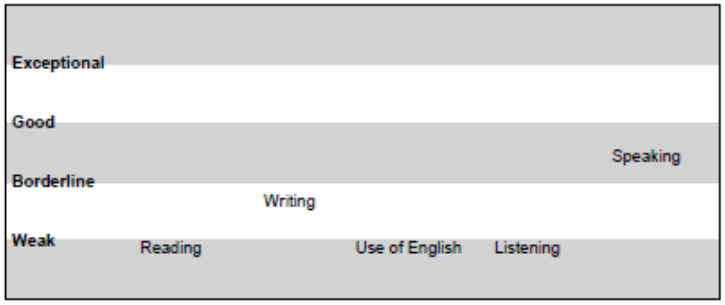
	MADRID

Qualification	Score	Result
CERTIFICATE IN ADVANCED ENGLISH	46/100	COUNCIL OF EUROPE LEVEL B2

Candidate Profile



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Qualification	Score	Result
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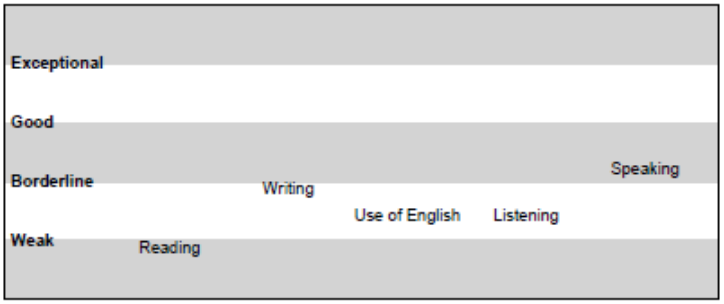
Candidate Profile



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Appendix 7

FCE CANDIDATE ASSESSMENT LIST

(September 2010)

Dear candidate,

Look for your name on this list and check the mark you obtained in the columns on the right. For those who obtained less than 60% it's advisable that they sign up for a Pre-First course. Those who obtained more than 70% can sign up for an FCE course. Those who are between 60 and 70% of correct answers need to take an oral test which will take place in the English Dpt. in primary this afternoon at……..

Surname, name initial	Read/35 %	Write/10	Listen/24 %	Speak/10	Total	%	Recomm. course
A. C.	17/49	3.4	14/56		139	46%	Pre-First
A. M.	28/80	9,6	16/64		240	80%	FCE
B. C. J.	13/37	1	4/16		63	21%	
C. G. Á.	26/74	8.5	19/76		235	78%	FCE
E. M.	28/80	8.1	18/72		233	78%	FCE
F. D. P.	11	5,5	14		142	47%	Pre-First
F. Á.	23/66	8.9	18/72		227	76%	FCE
F.C. J.	8/23	3.9	6/24		86	29%	
F.C. F.	17/49	5	10/40		139	46%	Pre-First
G. H. J.	24/69	8.8	12/48		205	68%	
G. C. A.	14/40	2	6/24		84	28%	
G. C. G.	18/51	5.2	18/72		175	58%	Pre-First
G. L. R.	23/66	7	15/60		196	65%	
G. L.	18/51	1	10/40		101	34%	
G. J.	16	6,1	12		155	52%	Pre-First
H. J.	31/89	8.2	20/80		251	84%	FCE
I. Á.	17/48	0.8	15/60		116	39%	
L. P. G.	25/71	7	11/44		185	62%	
L. A.	21/60	7.3	16/64		197	66%	
M. A.	25/71	8.8	19/76		253	84%	FCE
M. J. M.	19/54	6,4	14/56		164	55%	Pre-First
M. A.	23/66	7.8	16/64		208	69%	
M. J.	14/40	2	15/60		120	40%	Pre-First
M. G.	14/40	7.2	17/68		180	60%	
R. L.Q. M.	23/66	8.1	14/56		203	68%	
R.M.	12/29	5.6	15/60		145	45%	Pre-First
R.J. I.	30/86	9.6	20/80		262	87%	FCE
R. A. I.	19/54	5.3	13/52		159	53%	Pre-First
R. M. J.	14/40	0.5	10/40		85	28%	
S. S.M.B.	29/83	9.3	20/80		256	85%	FCE
S.C. M.	21/60	7,7	14/56		193	64%	
T. M.	24/69	7.6	18/7.2		215	72%	FCE

Appendix 8

Personal interview

(with questionnaire)

Name _____ Surname _____ Age _____ years studied English ____ Date ___

Reading paper: yes smts no

Part 1.

When learning vocabulary, do you group together words of the same category or belonging to the same topic? __ __ __

When learning vocabulary, do you dissect words to find out its component parts? __ __ __

When learning adjectives or verbs, do you look for opposites or synonymous to aid the recall process of those words? __ __ __

When learning vocabulary, do you note down the words and expressions in a section of your notebook to keep a written record of words to learn? __ __ __

When learning vocabulary, do you use the word you are trying to learn in sentences to make sure you get its meaning? __ __ __

When you don't know the meaning of a word do you resort to the dictionary? __ __ __

When you don't know the meaning of a word do you ask your teacher? __ __ __

When you don't know the meaning of a word, do you guess its meaning by making reference to the linguistic clues? __ __ __

When you don't know the meaning of a word, do you ask a study buddy? __ __ __

When you study the target language, do you want the teacher to give you the Grammar rule first and then practice with exercise? __ __ __

Or do you prefer to practice with exercise first and find out the grammar rule for yourself? __ __ __

Do you summarize concepts you are studying on the margins of your book? __ __ __

Do you underline or highlight key words and concepts when you study? __ __ __

Do you take notes when the teacher speaks? __ __ __

Do you doodle when you listen to your teacher? __ __ __

Do you organize the material you have to learn in tables, diagrams or flow charts? __ __ __

Do you record the material you have to learn on a tape and listen to it repeatedly until you learn the material? __ __ __

Do you study with a study buddy? ___ ___ ___

Do you study aloud? ___ ___ ___

Do you organize the material you have to learn drawing mental maps? ___ ___ ___

When you study do you associate the new information with what do you already know? ___ ___ ___

Do you decide in advance to pay attention to the material you are about to learn? _ ___ ___

Do you have a fixed study schedule that you follow without fail? ___ ___ ___

Do you study in the same place most of the time? ___ ___

___

Are you concerned about how language learning works? ___ ___

___

Part 2:

Tell me about yourself and the way you like to study.

Tell me what you find difficult to learn.

Tell me what you find easy to study

RESUMEN

La Relación entre Estilos de Aprendizaje y Estrategias de Aprendizaje: Estudio Empírico.

(Resumen)

1. Introducción

Durante muchos años la enseñanza de segundas lenguas ha estado basada principalmente en diferentes y variados enfoques metodológicos, desde el método de la traducción directa hasta al más reciente método comunicativo. Poca o ninguna atención se le prestaba a qué ocurría en la mente de la persona que se había propuesto aprender una segunda lengua. Se daba por hecho que asimilar otro idioma era cuestión de procurarse un buen profesorado y tener una buena metodología, y que el proceso de aprendizaje era un fenómeno natural y espontáneo que no necesitaba ser explorado.

Esta creencia ha ido poco a poco cambiando. En las últimas cuatro décadas más y más profesores de segundas lenguas e investigadores se han ido interesando en el fenómeno del aprendizaje. Una investigación cada vez más profunda ha sido dirigida a la exploración de los mecanismos del aprendizaje. Se puede afirmar que el incremento del volumen de investigación en esta materia ha sido y está siendo paralelo al aumento del número de personas que está aprendiendo una segunda lengua o lengua extranjera. También es verdad que el profesorado y la institución educativa necesitaban una nueva visión que diese una respuesta a aquellos casos fallidos que no ha sido posible levantar con sólo adoptar una metodología más o menos adecuada a la persona.

Este cambio de enfoque (en lugar de dirigir toda la atención hacia las metodologías de enseñanza) ha demostrado ser más fructífero en cuanto que los resultados para el alumnado han sido mejores. Es en èste contexto en el que se enmarca el presente estudio. Se pretende demostrar que hay más beneficios, para el alumnado y el

profesorado, si se enfoca la enseñanza de segundas lenguas hacia las dos vertientes: metodologías de enseñanza y procesos de aprendizaje. La investigación reciente está demostrando que ocupandose de cómo los aprendices asimilan, procesan y recuperan la información no sólo se consiguen resultados más satisfactorios, sino que mejora la relación entre la enseñanza y el aprendizaje, que en definitiva quiere decir mejor relación entre profesores y alumnos.

Entre los factores identificados que están directamente involucrados en los procesos de aprendizaje, encontramos que los *estilos y estrategias de aprendizaje* han acaparado la mayor atención entre los investigadores. Mucho se ha investigado en estos dos campos y, como consecuencia, la literatura está repleta de información, y resultados de estudios e investigaciones. No obstante, a pesar de la ingente cantidad de datos disponible acerca de los estilos y estrategias de aprendizaje, muy pocos estudios se han realizado con el propósito de explorar posibles relaciones entre estilos y estrategias de aprendizaje. De este casi vacío de investigación nace el planteamiento de este trabajo de investigación. Se plantea la pregunta: qué efectos se pueden derivar en un contexto de enseñanza de lengua extranjera, si somos capaces de instruir al alumno para que él seleccione y utilice aquellas estrategias de aprendizaje que mejor se ajusten a su estilo. Este estudio pretende averiguar, por lo tanto, si se pueden conseguir mejores rendimientos en el aprendizaje de lenguas extranjera, instruyendo al alumno para que utilice aquellas estrategias de aprendizaje que son más compatibles con su forma habitual de aprender. Algunos estudios (Schroeder, 1993; Zhenhui, 2001) han demostrado que cuando falta el ingrediente de la compatibilidad, los resultados anhelados no aparecen, es decir que cuando existe una discordancia entre el estilo de aprendizaje del alumno y el enfoque didáctico no sólo se cosechan malos resultados, sino que se generan experiencias negativas por parte de los estudiantes y los profesores. Este estudio, por lo tanto, se basa en el supuesto de que una correcta elección de estrategias de aprendizaje, hecha teniendo en cuenta el estilo de aprendizaje del discente, puede producir mejores resultados. Basado en este supuesto, se puede formular la siguiente hipótesis de trabajo: cuando un estudiante de la lengua extranjera elige y utiliza estrategias de aprendizaje que son compatibles con su estilo de aprendizaje, entonces los resultados de su aprendizaje serán mejores que

los de aquellos estudiantes que eligen y usan estrategias de aprendizaje que no son compatibles con su estilo de aprendizaje.

Se intentará demostrar dicha postura, primero, redefiniendo los papeles de profesor y alumno; segundo, revisando los conceptos básicos y teóricos de estilos y estrategias de aprendizaje y sus implicaciones en el proceso de aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras; tercero, se presentarán los resultados de dos estudios diseñados y ejecutados con el propósito de confirmar o anular dicha hipótesis de trabajo; y por último se apuntarán a las conclusiones que puedan derivarse de los resultados de la investigación.

2. Revisar el papel de profesor y alumno

En los últimos años el sistema educativo tradicional ha recibido numerosas críticas de muchos frentes. Se ha cuestionado la validez y la funcionalidad de los contenidos de las asignaturas escolares como herramienta para la supervivencia de cara a la vida fuera de la escuela (Bruner, 1966; Barnes, 1976; Illich, 1979).

En el campo de la enseñanza de la lengua extranjera, cuestionar la validez de los métodos adoptados resulta más fácil en cuanto que los alumnos de la lengua extranjera se mueven en un entorno que se encuentra lejano de la comunidad que habla el idioma que se quiere aprender. Este concepto resultará más claro si destacamos que un idioma se aprende como resultado de la interacción social, es decir que aprender un idioma, sea el primero, segundo o tercero, no es más que el resultado de esfuerzos repetidos y mantenidos para comunicarse con los demás. Dicho de otra forma, es fundamentalmente el producto del uso del idioma que se quiere aprender. En un entorno formal, el aprendizaje de un idioma extranjero se emprende con una esperanza lejana de que el idioma en cuestión pueda utilizarse algún día.

Datas dichas circunstancias, podemos decir que los idiomas extranjeros son enseñados con el propósito de 'aprenderlos' y no de 'usarlos'. Este escenario propicia la erección de barreras entre "aprender" y "vivir" (Little, 1991: 8). Illich (1979) expone esta misma visión, y argumenta que la mayoría de las cosas que se aprenden son el resultado de

ocurrencias casuales y hasta aquellas cosas aprendidas intencionalmente no son producto de una enseñanza programada. Este autor afirma que la escuela quiere dar la impresión de que todo lo que se aprende es el resultado de la enseñanza, mientras que en realidad, defiende el autor, es todo lo contrario. El autor se sigue preguntando de qué manera asignaturas como historia, geografía, química, etc. impactan en la vida que los alumnos viven fuera de la escuela, o en qué forma los conocimientos que emanan de esta disciplina contribuyen a la supervivencia de los alumnos cuando entran en contacto con la vida misma.

Se puede estar o no de acuerdo con la visión que Illich nos propone de la escuela, pero lo que sí es cierto es que las disciplinas, sus contenidos y la metodología adoptados son propuestas, y a veces impuestas, por el sistema educativo. Esta situación no sólo no ayuda a desarrollar una autentica responsabilidad del discente frente al estudio, sino que corre el riesgo de crear un mecanismo distanciador entre el discente y los contenidos de las materias, o por decirlo de otra forma, la información recibida en la escuela se etiqueta como "conocimientos escolares" que difícilmente formarán parte de los "conocimientos activos" que la persona utiliza en su vida diaria (Barnes, 1976:81).

No es imprudente afirmar que el escenario apenas dibujado podría ser la norma entre una buena parte de nuestro alumnado. Este podría ser así, especialmente, si se considera que la enseñanza, tal y como está concebida, es una actividad dirigida por profesores, concebida y mantenida con el objetivo principal de transmitir unos contenidos específicos o generales a un grupo de alumnos. El aprendizaje, por otra parte, es un proceso dirigido por el alumno y se rige por sus propias leyes. Es un fenómeno que procede a su propio ritmo y que tiene sus resultados finales (Bruner, 1966).

Visto desde esta óptica se puede decir que existe una barrera entre "enseñanza" y "aprendizaje", así cómo podría existir una barrera entre "vivir" y "aprender". En un escenario ideal, debería existir un contexto donde el alumno fuese la figura central y todo lo que le rodea debería estar concebido en función del alumno, o por lo menos que el profesorado de lenguas extranjera, para ser más efectivo, debería conocer más en profundidad quiénes son sus discentes. Esto implica conocer sus características

individuales, como edad, genero, motivación, nivel de ansiedad, auto-estima, cooperación, competitividad, y estilos y estrategias de aprendizaje. Estos aspectos personales son las claves para conocer mejor a nuestros alumnos (Oxford, 1992).

Otros investigadores sugieren nuevos puntos de vistas dentro de la dicotomía enseñanza-aprendizaje. Se habla de compartir responsabilidades entre alumno y profesor. Se habla de hacer entrar el alumno en el proceso de toma de decisiones por lo que conciernen materiales, metodología, evaluación, etc. De esta forma se fomenta el desarrollo de la responsabilidad del alumno frente al estudio (Holec, 1996). También se sugiere que el profesor en el marco de sus acciones y compromisos esté dispuesto a la pérdida de conocimientos y de delegación de autoridad hacia el alumno (Richterich, 1996).

En definitiva, lo que se busca es un nuevo aire en la relación entre profesor y alumno y, más aun, en la relación entre enseñanza y aprendizaje y así lo han expresado estos autores. Como expresa Whitehead, un buen profesor debe acercarse a su trabajo con mente abierta no para imponer, sino para trabajar junto a sus alumnos y desarrollar estrategias para mejorar. Lo que se necesita es hacer que, una vez cumplido con su deber, como haría un buen profesor, doctor o asesor, se despidiera tan rápida y felizmente como fuera posible (1998: 92).

3. Estilos de aprendizaje

El concepto de estilos de aprendizaje se ofrece para ser observado desde varias perspectivas. De forma sencilla se puede decir que los estilos de aprendizajes representan los *caminos preferidos por una persona a la hora de aprender algo nuevo*. Una definición más articulada la propone Lawrence. Para este autor los estilos de aprendizaje abarcan cuatro aspectos de la persona: (1) el aspecto cognitivo, que se refiere a la forma habitual y preferida de cómo funciona la mente de cara a una situación de aprendizaje; (2) el aspecto afectivo, que se refiere al modelo de actitudes e intereses que van a determinar sobre qué puntos la persona va a prestar mayor atención en un contexto de aprendizaje; (3) el aspecto social, que se refiere a la tendencia de buscar aquellas situaciones de aprendizaje más compatibles con su

funcionamiento mental; y (4) el aspecto operativo, que se refiere al uso de aquellas estrategias de aprendizaje que ofrecen mejores resultados (Wallace, 1984). Willing (1988) afirma que los estilos de aprendizaje son innatos y enraizados, mientras que Oxford & Ehrman (1988) definen los estilos de aprendizajes como una combinación de factores cognitivos, afectivos y de comportamiento.

La versatilidad de puntos de vista de este concepto ha generado algún que otro conflicto a la hora de buscar un criterio común de clasificación de los estilos de aprendizaje. Un buen número de autores ha intentado clasificar las dimensiones de los estilos de aprendizaje. En este trabajo se analizarán los modelos propuestos más relevantes, en especial manera se hará referencia a los modelos de Kolb (1984), Felder (1988), Witkin (1981) y Oxford (1992).

El modelo de Kolb clasifica a los estudiantes según las siguientes preferencias:

- Experiencias concretas
- Conceptualización abstracta
- Experimentación activa
- Observación reflexiva

Según el autor, las primeras dos preferencias tienen que ver con la asimilación de la información mientras que las últimas dos se refieren a cómo ésta viene procesada. El proceso comienza con una experiencia concreta donde el discente está involucrado en una nueva experiencia de aprendizaje; de aquí pasa a una fase de observación en la cual observa su experiencia y las de otros. En la tercera fase esas observaciones sirven para formular teorías que al mismo tiempo explican dichas observaciones; y, finalmente, las teorías sirven para resolver problemas o tomar decisiones.

Aunque en realidad sería imposible incluir a los aprendices en una u otra categoría en cuanto que todos ellos son el resultado de una combinación de las cuatro preferencias de formas de aprender, existe, según Kolb, la tendencia de cada aprendiz de depender de forma más pronunciada de una o máximo una combinación de dos, de las cuatro dimensiones. Gracias a esta observación, Kolb ha identificado cuatro modelos de aprendices:

Tipo 1: El aprendiz concreto-reflexivo

Tipo 2: El aprendiz abstracto-reflexivo

Tipo 3: El aprendiz abstracto-activo

Tipo 4: El aprendiz concreto-activo

Cada grupo responderá mejor si el instructor adopta un enfoque u otro. Para el primer grupo el instructor debería adoptar el papel de *motivador*, para el segundo grupo el papel de *experto*, para el tercer grupo debería trabajar como *entrenador*, mientras que para el cuarto grupo debería dejar solos a los aprendices en cuanto que ellos desean tener la oportunidad de descubrir cosas por su cuenta (Kolb, 1984).

El segundo modelo que vamos a analizar es aquel propuesto por Felder. Este autor también clasifica los tipos de aprendices en dicotomías y halla así cinco dimensiones:

1. La dimensión sensorial-intuitiva
2. La dimensión visual-verbal
3. La dimensión activa-reflexiva
4. La dimensión serial-global
5. La dimensión inductiva-deductiva

Al describir la primera dimensión, Felder se basa en la teoría de los tipos psicológicos de Jung (1971) que se centra en la forma en que los individuos perciben el mundo que les rodea. A las personas con tendencia a la sensorialidad les gusta ser concretos y metódicos, prefieren tratar con hechos e información precisa, ponen atención a los detalles y no quieren complicaciones inútiles, hacen buen uso de su memoria como estrategia de aprendizaje y se sienten más a gusto siguiendo instrucciones y procedimientos ordinarios. Las personas proclives a la intuición, por otra parte, tienden a ser abstractos e imaginativos, se sienten atraídos por principios, conceptos y teorías; los detalles les aburren y prefieren las complicaciones, huyen de las repeticiones y dan la bienvenida a la variedad; son rápidos pero prestan poca atención a los detalles.

En la segunda dimensión Felder describe a las personas con preferencias de aprendizaje visual como aquellas que aprenden mejor a través de imágenes, diagramas, diagramas de flujo, películas y demostraciones, mientras que las personas con preferencias verbales aprenden mejor a través de la palabra escrita u oral.

En referencia a la tercera dimensión, Felder toma prestado el modelo descrito por Kolb (1984). Para aquellos aprendices con tendencias a ser activos, la información que reciben la procesan en el mundo exterior; es decir, la discuten, la explican o la comprueban, mientras que los aprendices con orientación reflexiva procesan la información de manera introspectiva. Los aprendices activos aprovechan más cuando se involucran físicamente con la información; por otra parte, los aprendices reflexivos se aventajan cuando tienen tiempo para pensar acerca de la información.

La siguiente dimensión presentada por Felder es la de los aprendices seriales-globales. En el primer grupo se incluyen aquellos aprendices que mejor comprenden el material de estudio cuando éste se presenta en pequeños bloques relacionados entre sí. En el segundo grupo se incluyen aquellos que consiguen llegar a la comprensión de la materia de forma no lineal e inconexa. Para estos últimos es necesario que sepan relacionar el nuevo material con su experiencia y conocimientos previos antes de poder llegar a una comprensión completa de un tema.

La última dimensión propuesta por Felder es la inductiva-deductiva. El proceso inductivo procede del particular (observaciones, medidas y datos) al general (reglas, leyes y teorías), el proceso deductivo se realiza en sentido contrario. Los estudiantes, generalmente hablando, pueden preferir en forma moderada o acentuada una u otra forma, como ocurre con otras dimensiones. En cuanto al profesorado, en cambio, parece que exista una tendencia a enseñar de forma deductiva, a pesar de tener evidencia de que la presentación de material en forma inductiva conduce a mejores resultados para el alumno (Felder, 1995).

El siguiente modelo que vamos a presentar fue propuesto por Witkin (1981). Este autor considera que, en general, las personas aprenden de dos formas distintas y contrapuestas. Para ilustrar esta teoría mejor, Witkin ha acuñado la expresión *campo dependiente-campo independiente*. Con esta expresión se quiere referir a aquellas personas que aprenden de forma analítica y a aquellas que aprenden de forma global.

En la esfera analítica las personas tienen mayores recursos para dividir un problema en sus componentes y focalizar sobre los elementos más significativos a la hora de resolver un problema o tomar una decisión. En el campo del aprendizaje de un idioma extranjero, las personas en la esfera analítica están mejor capacitadas para identificar los elementos lingüísticos, separar lo esencial de lo superfluo y establecer conexiones entre los elementos. Desde el punto de vista perceptivo estas personas pueden distinguir las figuras frente al paisaje; pueden ver el árbol en vez del bosque.

Por el contrario, las personas que se inscriben en la esfera global tienden a ser menos analíticas y a percibir las situaciones como conjuntos. A la hora de tomar decisiones dependen de condicionantes externos. En el plano personal son muy sociables y amables. Gracias a estas cualidades, son capaces de establecer buenas relaciones sociales que luego aprovechan para desarrollar sus destrezas lingüísticas. En el plano perceptivo, las personas *campo-dependientes* viven sus experiencias de forma indiferenciada; son capaces de ver el bosque pero no ven el árbol (Witkin, 1981).

El último modelo de clasificación de estilos de aprendizajes nos viene propuesto por Oxford (1992). Esta autora contempla cuatro categorías de estilos de aprendizaje: el analítico-global, el sensorial, el intuitivo-serial, y la orientación hacia el cierre o apertura.

La primera categoría es una réplica del modelo propuesto por Witkin (1981) con la diferencia de que este modelo está adaptado principalmente al aprendizaje de segundos idiomas. En este sentido se hace hincapié en la capacidad de los aprendices analíticos de centrarse en los detalles gramaticales, en el análisis contrastivo, en aplicar las reglas gramaticales, y en seccionar palabras y frases. Por otro lado, en los aprendices globales destaca su capacidad de entablar fácilmente conversaciones, de mantener el flujo comunicativo a pesar de no poseer todas las herramientas para sostener una conversación, de no necesitar tiempo para reflexionar, pero destaca también la falta de precisión y la poca atención a los detalles.

La segunda categoría tiene importancia en tanto que se refiere a los canales sensoriales a través de los cuales se interioriza la información. Estos canales son normalmente conocidos como el *visual*, el *auditivo*, el *corporal o táctil*. Para sentirse más a gusto los aprendices visuales necesitan un entorno de aprendizaje repleto de

estímulos visuales como imágenes, símbolos, colores, mapas y diagramas. A los aprendices auditivos, en cambio, les favorece un ambiente de interacción oral, conferencias e instrucciones orales. Para los aprendices con tendencias a usar el cuerpo y las manos son preferibles las actividades manuales, usar objetos y realizar trabajos en los que tienen que moverse por la clase.

En la tercera categoría se encuentran aquellos aprendices que necesitan moverse paso a paso y de forma lineal, por un lado, y, por otro, encontramos aquellos aprendices que se aburren con este método y prefieren pensar en abstracto.

La última categoría propuesta por Oxford (1992) es la orientación hacia el cierre o la apertura. Los aprendices que se orientan hacia el cierre son muy trabajadores, organizados y planificadores. Necesitan claridad en las explicaciones y se sienten seguros cuando tienen acceso a las normas gramaticales. Los aprendices de la orientación contraria son más 'abiertos' en el sentido que no se toman el aprendizaje de la lengua extranjera tan en serio, la ven más bien cómo un juego o algo con lo cual divertirse. Gracias a esta actitud estas personas desarrollan mayor soltura pero tienen problemas con las estructuras del idioma.

Como podemos observar en los varios modelos propuestos, aunque existan principios de aprendizaje con aspectos comunes, las personas aprenden de formas diferentes. De esto podemos deducir que también el enfoque didáctico tiene que variar. Algunos estudios han demostrado que cuando los estudiantes han sido sometidos de forma constante a cursos formativos en los cuales el estilo didáctico no estaba en armonía con su estilo de aprendizaje, se han producido frustración, desilusión y estrés por parte de los estudiantes (Smith & Renzulli). Por el contrario, se ha demostrado que armonizar el estilo didáctico con los estilos de aprendizaje ha mejorado mucho el rendimiento académico, la actitud y el comportamiento de los alumnos (Oxford *et al*, 1991; Wallace y Oxford, 1992).

En conclusión se ha reconocido que aprender no es simplemente un proceso natural y espontáneo igual para todos. Se ha demostrado que las personas usan diferentes mecanismos para aprender y que cuando el principio de diversidad se aplica en la formación de los estudiantes se obtienen buenos resultados. Se puede decir que la

introducción del concepto de estilo de aprendizaje ha cambiado positivamente el panorama didáctico en el área de la enseñanza del idioma extranjero.

4. Estrategias de aprendizaje

Generalmente las estrategias de aprendizaje son aquellas acciones decididas y emprendidas por un aprendiz con el objeto de mejorar su rendimiento en el aprendizaje de un idioma extranjero. También se pueden considerar como tendencias generales o enfoques y técnicas empleadas por los aprendices en su afán de dominar otro idioma (Stern, 1983). Más tarde las estrategias de aprendizaje se definen cómo comportamiento y pensamientos que el aprendiz de un idioma extranjero adopta (Weinstein & Mayer, 1986). También se han definidos cómo técnicas y enfoques observables que el aprendiz usa para promover su aprendizaje (Chamot, 1987). De la misma forma las describe Oxford cuando afirma que son "comportamientos y técnicas específicas que los aprendices emprenden para facilitar su aprendizaje" (1989: 40, traducción propia). Para Ellis las estrategias de aprendizaje "consisten en actividades mentales y comportamentales relacionadas con una fase especifica del proceso de adquisición y uso del idioma" (1994: 529, traducción propia). En la misma línea se vuelve a expresar Weinstein cuando las define como "cualquier comportamiento, pensamiento o acción durante el aprendizaje, por parte del aprendiz dirigida a influir la adquisición, almacenamiento en la memoria, integración, o disponibilidad para uso futuro de nuevos conocimientos y destrezas" (Weinstein et al., 1998: 12, traducción propia).

Como es posible constatar, la variedad de definiciones y los diferentes conceptos que la constituyen hacen que el sujeto adquiera una notable complejidad. En definitiva se puede decir que:

1. Las estrategias se refieren tanto a enfoques generales como a acciones específicas o técnicas para aprender otro idioma.
2. Las estrategias se adoptan para resolver problemas. El aprendiz las usa para resolver algún problema de aprendizaje.

3. Los aprendices son normalmente conscientes de las estrategias que usan y las pueden identificar si se les pide.
4. Las estrategias de aprendizaje se pueden aplicar tanto en el primer como en el segundo idioma.
5. Algunas estrategias son de comportamiento mientras otras son mentales; por esto algunas son observables mientras que otras no lo son.
6. Hay estrategias que contribuyen directa o indirectamente al proceso de aprendizaje aportando información sobre la segunda lengua, mientras que hay otras que contribuyen directamente.
7. El uso de las estrategias varía considerablemente como resultado de la naturaleza de la tarea que el aprendiz quiere realizar y en función de sus preferencias personales.
8. La elección de estrategias está influida por numerosos factores entre los cuales uno de los más destacados es el estilo de aprendizaje.

Cabe decir que algún estudio se ha realizado con el objeto de relacionar estrategias de aprendizaje con los estilos de aprendizaje.

5. Combinar estilos y estrategias de aprendizaje

Algunos estudios han querido relacionar el éxito en el aprendizaje de idiomas con el uso de una gran variedad de estrategias de aprendizaje (Cohen, 1990). Otros estudios, sin embargo, han descubierto que la introducción de las estrategias de aprendizaje en cursos de formación de idiomas ha aportado sólo pequeñas mejorías en algunas áreas.

Por otra parte, la introducción del concepto de estilos de aprendizaje en el panorama de la enseñanza de idiomas ha sensibilizado el papel del profesorado hacia los alumnos y ha hecho que los primeros se dieran cuenta de que las personas están dotadas de mecanismos de aprendizaje muy individuales. Este reconocimiento ha llevado al profesorado de idiomas a enfocar sus clases utilizando una variedad de medios tanto audio-visuales como manuales (Kang, 1999). El nuevo enfoque ha recibido muy buena acogida por parte de los alumnos que han encontrado estas clases interesantes y motivadoras. Es posible que parte del éxito en el nuevo enfoque sea debido no sólo al

factor variedad, sino principalmente al hecho de que la variedad estimula a alumnos con diferentes estilos de aprendizaje.

Esta observación ha servido para que se investigue una posible relación entre estilos y estrategias de aprendizaje. Felder (1995) sugiere una serie de acoplamientos de estrategias con estilos de aprendizaje. Por ejemplo, para alumnos con tendencia a ser activos él sugiere estudiar en grupo porque en estos casos la información se entiende y se guarda mejor si viene discutida, aplicada y explicada a otros. Sería diferente para alumnos reflexivos en tanto que ellos necesitan tiempo para pensar la información. Y así con otros estilos de aprendizaje. Con esto lo importante no es sólo adoptar una gran variedad de estrategias de aprendizaje, sino de capitalizar sobre aquellas estrategias con las cuales los alumnos se encuentra más familiarizados y más a gusto (Oxford, 1992: 42).

6. Descripción del estudio

La parte empírica de este trabajo de investigación está compuesta por dos estudios. El primero se realizó durante el desarrollo del curso escolar 2002/03 con dos grupos de estudiantes adolescentes que seguieron un curso de preparación para presentarse al examen de First Certificate Examination en Junio 2003. El primer grupo, formado sólo por chicos de entre 14 y 17 años, contaba con 12 participantes, mientras que el segundo grupo, mayoritariamente de chicas (6) del mismo abanico de edad, contaba con 8 participantes.

Aunque el curso de preparación al examen de Cambridge arrancó en octubre, el estudio propiamente dicho empezó en marzo. Al comienzo de este mes se introdujo el concepto de estilos de aprendizaje y a continuación se pasó un cuestionario (Barsch, 1999; Coderre, 2000) para averiguar el estilo de aprendizaje de cada participante. Una vez logrados estos datos, se redactó una nota informando a cada participante del resultado del cuestionario y de las características de cada estilo, sugiriendo, además, una serie de estrategias de aprendizaje compatibles con el estilo personal de cada participante. El estudio se ha centrado en los canales sensoriales a través de los cuales las personas reciben la información, es decir el canal de la vista, del oído y del tacto - con la expresión “tacto” nos referimos a los movimientos del cuerpo y al uso de las manos. Con la nota se animó a cada participante a usar las estrategias de aprendizaje

sugeridas y a los 15 días se pasó una lista de estrategias compilada por Rubin (1981) con el propósito de dar a conocer a los participantes el número y variedad de estrategias de aprendizaje utilizadas por otros aprendices de lenguas extranjeras. Después de 15 días se realizó una actividad tipo 'lluvia de ideas' para averiguar si había participantes que estaban utilizando estrategias de aprendizaje y qué clase de estrategias. También se pidió que escogieran de la lista de Rubin aquellas estrategias que les resultaban más familiares, que habían utilizado, que estaban utilizando o que iban a utilizar. Durante el período de la investigación hubo también breves entrevistas con los participantes siempre con el propósito de descubrir si usaban estrategias de aprendizaje y, en caso afirmativo, cómo y cuáles. Todas las estrategias que vieron la luz como resultado de las actividades arriba mencionadas se recogieron en una tabla[29], en la cual también aparecen el/los estilo/s y el numero de cada participante. El formato de la tabla favorece una visualización global del estilo de aprendizaje y de la elección de las estrategias y permite al mismo tiempo hacer una previsión de los resultados que podría conseguir cada estudiante. Los criterios principales sobre los cuales se han basado las previsiones han sido dos. Primero se ha buscado averiguar si el participante ha elegido y usado un buen número y una variedad de estrategias de aprendizaje. Segundo se ha querido asegurar si el alumno ha elegido y usado una cantidad suficiente de estrategias de aprendizaje compatibles con su estilo de aprendizaje dominante o por lo menos con su segundo canal preferente de aprendizaje. Sobre la base de estos 2 criterios han salido 8 participantes de los 20. Todos estos estudiantes han usado un número igual o superior al resto, y también han elegido y usado un buen número de estrategias compatibles con su estilo de aprendizaje.

El segundo estudio se realizó durante el desarrollo del curso escolar 2010/2011. Los grupos objeto de estudio eran también dos, pero esta vez los dos compuestos de sólo chicos de aproximadamente la misma edad que en el primer estudio. El primer grupo se preparaba para el diploma de Cambridge del First Certificate in English (FCE), mientras que el segundo grupo preparaba el diploma del Certificate in Advanced English (CAE). En este estudio, a diferencia del primero, se han intentado neutralizar algunas variables que estaban presentes en el primer estudio. Por ejemplo, la variable

[29] Tabla 3a - 3j se encuentra en páginas 150-159.

de género y la edad (la edad de los participantes en el primer grupo era de 14-15 años, mientras que la edad de los participantes del segundo grupo era de 15-16 años). También se ha intentado controlar la variable del nivel de destreza en las cuatro habilidades fundamentales de un idioma que son: comprender, hablar, leer y escribir. Esto se ha conseguido aplicando una serie de test para averiguar el nivel de cada participante y seleccionando sólo aquellos que alcanzaban unos valores pre-establecidos. También se han seleccionado los participantes en función de las notas de las otras asignaturas.

Durante el curso, la recogida de los resultados de los tests y otros datos ha sido más exitosa que en el estudio precedente. Han faltado muy pocos resultados de las pruebas que han sido impartidas durante el año. Al contrario que en el primer estudio, la segunda investigación ha empezado paralelamente al comienzo del curso. Ya desde los primeros días se han introducidos los conceptos de estilos y estrategias de aprendizajes. El uso de estas últimas también ha comenzado desde muy pronto. Otra característica propia del segundo estudio ha sido la agrupación de estrategias de aprendizaje que iban dirigidas a realizar tareas específicas como lectura, escucha de textos orales y transformación de estructuras gramaticales. Las estrategias propuestas eran adaptadas a las preferencias sensoriales de los participantes (auditivos o visuales). Los resultados de este segundo estudio se detallan en el siguiente apartado.

7. Resultados

La parte empírica del trabajo ha significado también la medición de valores que se han obtenido registrando los resultados de una serie de tests que se utilizaron para la práctica de cara a los exámenes del First Certificate Examination. En concreto los participantes del primer estudio, a lo largo de la duración del mismo (3 meses), han completado una serie de tests especialmente de comprensión lectora (reading tests) y de comprensión oral cuyos resultados han sido recogidos en una tabla (Tabla 4, pg. 161 del trabajo antes citado). En la tabla se pueden observar los resultados de cada test para cada participante que han sido clasificados por orden cronológico. Se ha observado la sucesión de dichos valores y se ha hallado una tendencia. La tendencia puede ser ascendente, plana o descendente. Los resultados han registrado una

tendencia positiva, al menos en una de las destrezas en examen, en todos los 8 casos descritos arriba; es decir, en todos aquellos estudiantes que han usado más estrategias y que han elegido las más compatibles con su estilo de aprendizaje preferido. En los restantes casos, se ha hallado una tendencia negativa o plana. Asimismo, es necesario resaltar que la mayoría de los 8 casos que han acertado en la elección de las estrategias de aprendizaje, han registrado también unas calificaciones superiores a la media, mientras que en casi todos los casos restantes las calificaciones han sido inferiores a la media.

En el caso del segundo estudio, se puede decir que de los 24 participantes, 19 han obtenido los resultados que se habían pronosticado. De estos 19, 5 han conseguido resultados negativos por no haber usado estrategias o no haberlas usadas en medida suficiente, y 14 han obtenido buenos resultados según las predicciones que se han hecho para ellos. Cinco participantes no han obtenido los resultados que se habían vaticinados para ellos. Con estos participantes se ha aplicado también un test estadístico (chi test) para averiguar si hay una correlación directa entre el uso de las estrategias de aprendizaje y los resultados obtenidos. El resultados de este test ha descartado (ver pg. 289) la nulidad de la relación y aunque no confirmando una correlación entre dichos valores, ha sugerido que existe una *asociación* entre el empleo de estrategias de aprendizajes y los resultados obtenidos.

8. Conclusiones

Con los resultados arriba expuestos podemos llegar a dos conclusiones. Primero, podemos concluir que, aunque otros factores como la edad, el género, el nivel inicial de dominio de la lengua extranjera puedan influir en una dirección u otra en los resultados de los tests, existe evidencia de que el uso de una correcta elección de estrategias de aprendizaje influye positivamente en mejorar los resultados en un contexto de aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera. Los mecanismos a través de los cuales el uso de dichas estrategias potencia el rendimiento de los aprendices de una lengua extranjera, son, al día de hoy, desconocidos. Lo que sí se puede afirmar, es que la mayoría de las estrategias se apoyan en principios sacados de las teorías de aprendizaje que han surgido en el último medio siglo aproximadamente. Y segundo, se

puede afirmar que es posible que exista un nivel de umbral de dominio de un segundo idioma por encima del cual es posible adoptar un buen número de estrategias de aprendizaje, y por debajo del cual resulta más difícil utilizar estrategias de aprendizaje (Cummins, 1981).